

Maxims and Reflections

U P O N

P L A Y S.

(*In Answer to a Discourse, Of the Lawfulness
and Unlawfulness of PLAYS. Printed
Before a late PLAT Entituled,
BEAUTY in DISTRESS.*)

Written in *F R E N C H* by
the Bp. of *M E A U X*.

And now made *E N G L I S H*.

The PREFACE By another *H A N D*.

L O N D O N,

Printed for *R. Sare*, at *Grays-Inn Gate*, in
Holborne. 1699.



THE PREFACE

THE Charge drawn up by Mr. Collier, against the English Stage hath obliged the Persons concerned in it, to use all possible methods for their own Vindication. But their Endeavours of this kind have been such as seem to have done no great Service to their Cause. The natural Reflection, arising upon the present State of the Controversy, is, that, when Persons so nearly concerned and so well qualified, to say all that the case will bear, have yet been able to say so little to the main points of the Accusation brought against them, the only effectual Reply would be either to write no more for the Stage, or to write for it after quite another manner, than of late hath been done. They that have attempted to answer the View are in good hands already. But since other Succours are called in from abroad, 'tis fit the World should know, that this Reserve too hath been already defeated in it's own Country. And that we ought not to be imposed upon here in England, with an Adversary,

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sary, whose Arguments have been not only confuted and Scorned by Others, but also retracted by Himself, at home.

That Moroseness of humour, which Some in great good manners have of late been pleased to fix upon the English as their peculiar Character, might possibly be thought to dispose us to a blameable Extreme of Rigor in these matters. And therefore a Foreign Authority was artificially enough brought in, to reproach our pretended Niceness and Austerity. But when the Arguments of this Reply are observed to carry the Point as high, as even the so much upbraided View it self; All but the Willfully blind must see, that even the Gayeties of France could not endure the Corruptions of the Modern Theatres. And that the Complaints against such detestable Abuses are not due to any Quality of the Climate, or particular Turn of Temper; but to the common and uniform Principles of Christianity and Virtue, which are the same in every Nation, professing to be governed by them.

To give that Discourse a better face, it is introduced by way of Letter from a Worthy Divine of the Church of England; and published before a late Play called Beauty in Distress. Tis
P. IX. X. said to be approved, and recommended by that Re-
XXVI. verend Person, for the satisfying some Scruples, whether a man may Lawfully write for the Stage. For a full Resolution whereof the doubting Poet is referred to this Discourse, as that which is presumed to come fully up to his purpose. But we are not told, whether the Divine or the Poet, or who else was the Translator of this Discourse: Or whether that Worthy Friend perused it in French, or in English only. Which yet in the present Case
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are Material Circumstances, and such as ought not to have been concealed, for Two Reasons particularly, which I hold myself obliged to give the Reader Intimation of.

The First is, That the following Reply produces and answers some Passages of the French Discourse, not to be found in the English. And these not only Expressions or single Sentences, but entire Arguments. Such is that of Plays being a Diversion suitable to the Design of instituting the Sabbath. Such again That which justifies the Acting them the whole Lent throughout. Now this manner of dealing is not exactly agreeable with that Impartiality and Freedom promised in the beginning of the Worthy Divines Letter. And therefore I can very hardly be perswaded, that One of that Character and Function, had the Forming of the Discourse, in the manner it now appears before Mr. M's. Play. P. 1X.

The other Reason, why I Suspect the Discourse not to be translated, or indeed so thoroughly approved, by a Divine of the Church of England, is, that, even in what does appear there, he speaks very favourably of acting Plays upon Sundays. Now admitting, that all the Profession are not such sower Criticks as Mr. Collier, yet this is a Liberty, which I do not remember to have heard, that any Modern Divines of that Church allow. And whatever the Poet's Friend may be in His esteem, I shrewdly suspect, that He would hardly pass for a very Worthy Divine, who should so far Countenance these Diversions, as to let them into a share of that Holyday, dedicated to the Worship and more immediate Service of Almighty God.

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One would not hastily question Testimonies in matters of Fact, where there appears any probable Arguments to support them. And therefore I am far from objecting against the Knowledge and Integrity of the Booksellers called in to vouch for that Letter, But withall I must beg leave to think it strange, that a Person of Learning and Character should so incautiously espouse a Discourse, and recommend it for the direction of a Gentleman's Conscience, who consulted him for Advice; the Reasoning whereof is not only so weak and Superficial, but grounded upon Misconstruction in some, and Misrepresentation in Other Authorities cited by it. Methinks these ought to have been well examined, before a man had so perfectly gone in to the Consequences drawn from them: such of them at least as are exceeding obvious, and might have been detected by recurring to Books, which almost every Divine hath ready at hand.

In this translated Reply the Reader will not have cause to complain of such Neglect. The Passages out of Thom: Aquinas, St. Jerom, and some others, have been diligently compared, and the Originals faithfully inserted in most material points. And I cannot but wish, that this Book, extant at Paris ever since 1694, had fallen into the hands of this Doubting Gentleman, instead of that Discourse, which it was intended to confute: That neither the Translator, nor his Friend the Worthy Divine, might have given themselves the Trouble of a Vindication of Plays; so reproachfully treated, and so substantially answered, that one would wonder it should have the confidence to appear in English afterwards, to tempt the same Scorn here, when followed cross the Seas by the Bishop of Meaux.

By

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By some expressions, I confess one might be apt to think, that the Author of the Discourse was not perfectly known. But of that no reasonable Doubt can remain, when we find the Replier to have retracted: and Submitted to the Censure of the Church, Why the Author expresses himself in Terms so soft and general I undertake not to determine. He might in Tenderneſs forbear his Adverſarys Name; He might be content to look upon him as an unwary Publiſher, rather than the Writer; and, after Submiſſion made, might charitably deſire, as far as might be, to cover his Reproach. It Suffices, that the Opinions in the Book be confuted, and expoſed to ſhame; and when this is done in the Punishment of the Reputed Author, the matter is not great, if the Name from thenceforth be forgotten. If Mons^r Caffaro had the Hardineſs to aſſert a Tract ſo unworthy his Character, his Answerer would not add perhaps to the Scandall, when that Shame had been taken to himſelf, with a Remorſe becoming the Fact. But be this how it will, Cenſures, we know, are not inflicted upon Indefinite Some-bodies; that ſuch were inflicted, and a Retraction made, the very firſt Period is peremptory: And I hope the Bp. of Meaux, and his manner of writing, are at leaſt as credible an Evidence of this, as the Bookſellers can be allowed to

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be, of that Letter being genuine, which refers Mr. M's Conscience to the Discourse for Satisfaction.

I am heartily glad, if the Plays written by that ingenious Gentleman are so chaste and inoffensive, as he declares them to be. The rather, because the Success he mentions overthrows that frivolous Pretence, of the Poets lying under a Necessity of writing lewdly in order to please the Town. And if this Gentleman do yet retain the same tenderness of doing nothing for Gain or Glory, which does not strictly become him: If he be still as desirous to be satisfied what does, or does not, become him to do, with regard to the matter in hand, as I ought to presume he was, when he consulted his Friend, I would make it my request, that this Reply may be Seriously and impartially considered. And I cannot but hope, that it may disabuse him of the Errours the Discourse might lead him into, and I am much mistaken, if, upon these Terms, he ever writes for the Stage any more. Prejudice and Passion, Vain glory and Profit, not Reason, and Virtue, and the Common Good, seem but too plainly to support this Practice, and the Defence of it, as the matter is at present managed among us. And a Person of Mr. M's Parts and Attainments cannot be at a loss, for much nobler Subjects to employ them upon.

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A Popular one perhaps it may be, but sure a wilder Suggestion, never was offered to men of Common sense, than, that if the Stage be damned, the Art used by Moses, and David, and Solomon, must be no more. Are we fallen into an Age so incapable of distinguishing, that there should be no visible difference left between the Excellencies and the Abuse of any Art? No. Mr: Dryden himself hath taught us better. We will have all due regard for the Author of Absalom and Achitophel, and several other pieces of just renown, and should admire him for a rich Vein of Poetry, though he had never written a Play in his whole Life. Nor shall we think our selves obliged to burn the Translation of Virgil by vertue of that sentence, which seems here to be pronounced upon that of the Fourth Book of Lucretius The World, I Suppose, are not all agreed, that there is but One Sort of Poetry; and as far from allowing, that the Dramatick, is that One. They who write after those Divine, Patterns of Moses &c: will be no whit the less Poets, though there were not a Theatre left upon the Face of the Earth; Their Honours will be more deserved, Their Laurels more verdant and lasting, when blemished, with none of those Reproaches from Others, or their own breasts, which are due to the Corrupters of Mankind, And such are all They, who soften
men's

See Mr.
D's. Verses
before
Beauty, in
Distress.

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men's abhorrence of Vice, and cherish their dangerous Passions. To tell us then, that All, even Divine; Poetry must be silenced and for ever lost, when the Play-houses are once shut up, is to impose too grossly upon our Understandings. And their Sophistry bears hard, methinks, upon Profaneness, which insinuates the Hymns dictated by the Holy Spirit, of God, to be so nearly related to the Modern Compositions for the Stage, that both must of necessity stand and fall together.

If Poetry have of late sunk in its credit, that misfortune is owing to the degenerate and Mercenary Pens, of some who have set up for the great Masters of it. No man I presume, is for exterminating that noble Art, no not even in the Dramatick part; provided it can be effectually reformed. But if the Reformation of the Stage be no longer practicable, reason good that the incurable Evil should be cut off: If it be practicable, let the Persons concerned give Evidence of it to the World, by tempering their Wit so, as to render it Serviceable to Virtuous purposes, without giving just offence to wise, and Good men. For it is not the Pretence of a good Design which can free the Undertakers from Blame, unless the Goodness of the end and Intention be Seconded with a Prudent Management of the Means. And if Matters once should come to that
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that Extremity, better and much more becoming of the Two, no doubt it were, that our Maker's Praises should be sunk into Prose (as this Ingenious Person phrases it) than that in the midst of a Christian City, that Maker should be six days in seven publicly insulted and blasphemed in Poetry.

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T H A T

Maxims and Reflections

UPON

PLAYS.

I. **T**HAT Father, who is Supposed to be the Author of a late Letter, or Discourse in defence of Plays, hath given publick Satisfaction to the World; by a Recantation, as Submissive as it was solemn. The Authority of the Church hath exerted it self upon this Occasion. And, by Her Pious Care, Truth hath had right done it, sound Doctrine is asserted and preserved; And all that now remains necessary to be done, is to disabuse and inform the world; upon a Subject which great pains have been taken to darken and perplex. The Arguments made use of to this purpose are indeed in their own nature but weak and frivolous; Such as would deserve only to be despised; if we might be allowed to despise any thing, which brings unwary and injudicious

This Treatise occasioned by a New discourse in favour of Plays.

B.

• Souls

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Souls into hazard ; And such are these, because in their Consequences apt to confound men of worldly minds, who are always disposed to be led easily into Errour, by any thing that cherishes and flatters their Inclinations. The Authority of the Holy Fathers is here very laboriously eluded, and That of the Schoolmen and Casuists set up in Opposition against it: And some crafty Accommodations have been found out to bring these two seemingly contending Parties upon amicable terms with one another ; As if Plays in process of time were become more innocent, pure and inoffensive in Our days, in comparison of what they were in Theirs, who inveighed against them with such Holy Vehemence heretofore. The sacred names of *St. Thomas* and other eminent Lights in the Church are produced in their Vindication ; and even the Confessions of Penitents made to give Testimony to the Lawfulness and Harmless effects of these Diversions. The Person concerned in this Apology is a *Priest* and a *Confessor*, and he gives us his solemn word, that he is utterly ignorant of all those Vices and evil Consequences, which are charged upon Plays, by some over-rigorous and morose Divines. The force of Publick Censures, and the Authority of Rituals, are weakned and disparaged: And no Artifice in short is omitted in this little Tract, which so narrow a Compass could

could be capable of. For as it's Brevity would render it more generally read, so the Composition is of that contrivance, which will qualify it admirably for imposing upon the Reader, by putting a good face upon a bad Cause. Nothing farther could be requisite, to abuse the weak and ignorant; and to give countenance to that Infirmary of Humane Nature, which, without such Advocates, is but too prone to indulge it self. Upon these accounts some Persons eminent for their Piety and Learning, and their Station in the Church, who are thoroughly acquainted with the dispositions of Mankind, and well aware of the mischiefs, which may grow from thus patronizing them, have thought it may be a usefull and seasonable prevention, to return an answer to this Discourse, by some short Reflections, which besides the same advantage of Brevity to recommend them to the Readers Perusal, may in all points be agreeable to the great Principles of Religion. By the advice of these Persons it is, that I suffer this little Tract to come abroad, and make a small Addition to the several Discourses already published upon this subject.

II. To remove those powerfull Prepossessions, which so considerable an Authority as that of *Thomas Aquinas* might infect mens minds withal, it may possibly be thought the properest

*The True
Stat of the
Question.*

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perest course to begin this Tract with discussing the severall Passages produced in favour of Plays from so eminent a Casuist. But I rather choose to lead my Reader to the Truth by a shorter Cut; and, before I engage him in this Examination, to lay down some plain principles, which will require neither niceness of Judgment, nor laborious Reading. For thus much is agreed on all hands, and no man indeed can pretend to deny it, that if *St. Thomas*, and other Holy Persons have tolerated or allowed Plays, it was no part of their Intention, that such among these as are destructive of Good manners should lay claime to any Privilege or Benefit, by such Toleration, or be thought in any degree to be approved or protected by them. This is the point, to which we must keep our Adversaries close, and I desire no fairer Advantage to joyn Issue upon, not doubting but upon this single Concession I shall be able to overthrow all the Pretensions of this Apology.

Whether
the modern
Plays be so
free from
Blame, as
this Au-
thour
would re-
present
them.
* P. XXI.
Fr. 38.40.

III. Now the First thing, which I find fault with upon this Occasion, is, that One who calls himself a Priest should have the Confidence to affirm, that Plays, such as are now acted, are such as he can see no fault in, nay that *they are at present so pure upon the French Theatre, that there is nothing in them which can offend the chastest Ear. It seems then at this rate, that either all those impious and scandalous Passages, in which the

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Compositions of *Moliera* abound, must be allowed for Innocent and Unblameable; or else that these Plays are not to be reckoned among the Modern Compositions. And all this, though he were an Author, that dyed in a manner but the other day in publick view; and who Still continues to fill the stage, with the grossest and most nausious *Double-entendres* that ever in any Age poysoned the Ears of Christians.

But by your leave, Sir, Priest or Monk, or *Christian* at least if you be, you cannot certainly be ignorant, that such infamous Expressions as His, are included among those filthy things, which ought not *so much as to be once named among the Saints*. And therefore you must not oblige me to repeat such passages, as cannot be spoken or heard without a breach of modesty. Consider therefore, if you dare presume openly to avow, and espouse the Cause of such Compositions, as make it their constant practice and business to expose Virtue and Religion to scorn and Contempt; to excuse Debauchery and make it pass for Gallantry and Humour; where Modesty is eternally offended, and Chastity in danger of being violated, by the boldest and most Shame less attempts upon it. For what other Construction can I reasonably put upon those impudent Expressions, over which a Vail perhaps is drawn,

Ephes.
v. 3.

but such as is much too thin to cover their Nakedness? Think again if you can reconcile it with the Character of a *Priest*, or in truth of any common *Christian*, to vindicate and approve that Vice and Dissoluteness, which the Operas of *Quinault* do even teach by Rule, and advance as Doctrine, by all those false Softnesses and Treacherous Invitations to make use of Time and Youth, of which his Poems are full. For my own part I must tell you, that I my self have seen that Author very seriously Lament those Extravagances a hundred times. But now we are come to that pass, as even to countenance and defend what he thought just cause of Repentance and deep Remorse, when he came to a better sense of things, and began to think of his Salvation in good Earnest. And if the French Theatre be so little liable to Censure, as this Discourse would perswade us, we must go farther yet, and think it allowable, that those Sentiments which the Corruption of our nature finds, so manifest and great danger from being flattered and upheld in, should receive yet more advantage of impressing themselves upon our Souls, by that life and moving Efficacy conveyed into them, from the Musical Airs and Measures, which inspire nothing but Effeminacy.

upon *P L A Y S*.

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If *Lully* was a Master in his Art, he must have shewed it, as indeed he hath, by futing the Airs and Voices of his Men and Women Singers to the Words and Genius of the Poems they recite. And his Compositions so much esteemed and Sung in the World serve only to insinuate the most deceitfull Passions, and render them as pleasing and as lively, as it is possible for all the Witchcraft of Musick to do. And these things, it is plain, would not enter so easily, nor stick so fast upon the Memory, had they not first gained the Outworks, and by taking Possession of the Ear made their way into the Heart.

It is to little or no purpose to reply upon this occasion, that the Minds of the Spectators are wholly intent upon the Song and the show, without entring so far as the sense of the Words, or being affected with the Passions expressed by them. For this is the very Point in which the Danger lyes, that while men are charmed by the Sweetness of the Musick, or confounded by the surprizing Gayety of the Scenes and Action, these Sentiments get within us before we are aware, and force a delight upon us, which we are not provided to withstand. Now there is no need, God knows, of arming those Inclinations with Musick and Voices, which by their own proper strength are but

too well qualified, to make a conquest of our Vertue. And if you will maintain, that the bare Representation of the most agreeable Passions in the Tragedies written by a *Cornelle* and a *Racine*, brings Modesty into no hazard; I must be bold to say, that in so doing you take upon you to give the Latter of these Authors the Lye. Who now having betaken himself to noble Studies and Subjects more worthy his Character, does not stick to renounce his *Berenice*. And I have no other reason for mentioning this rather than the rest of his Plays, but that it offered it self first to my Thoughts. But while the Poet is content to blush for his Performances, and think them liable to censure; You, Sir, who pretend to the Character of a Priest, are labouring his Relapse, and would fain reconcile him to his former Errours.

Whether
the Representation
of the Passions move
them only
by Accident. P.
XXIII.
XXIV. Fr.
46. 47.

IV. You tell us farther that such Representations of the Passions that are agreeable to us, and the Words by which those Passions are expressed in Plays, do not excite them in us, except only by an indirect and very remote Operation, casually and by Accident (as you are pleased to phrase it) and not in reality and in the nature of the thing. But the matter is quite otherwise. For certainly nothing can be more direct, nothing is more essential, more natural to these Compositions, than that which is the very End, and
express

upon PLAYS.

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express Design of the Composers, the Actors, and the Audience. What, I beseech you, was the Intention of *Corneille* in his *Cid* but to make the whole House in love with his *Chimene*, that every man there should joyn with *Roderique* in the Adoration he pays her, that they should tremble, and Sympathise with him when in fear of losing her; and look upon themselves as happy as He did, when in hopes of enjoying his Mistress? The very First and fundamentall Principle of the *Drama*, whether for Tragedy or Comedy, is to infuse into the Audience the present Dispositions of the Stage; to make each Spectator a party in what is doing. And if either the Poet or the Player have not the skill to move and transport us with the Passion he is labouring to express pray what becomes of him? Does he not presently grow flat and cold upon your hands, tedious and ridiculous? This I am sure is the Judgment of the great Masters in this Art; so says *Horace*.

Si. curat cor Spectantis tetigisse querela,--

—*Aut dormit abo aut ridebo,* Art Poet.

*He that would have Spectators share his
Must write not only well but movingly, (Grief,
And raise men's Passions to what height he
(will,
He*

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*He only makes me sad who shows the way
 And first is sad himself: then (Telephus,)
 I feel the weight of Your Calamities,
 And fancy all your Miseries my Own ;
 But if you Act them ill, I sleep or laugh.
 Ld. Roscem.*

This And a great deal more you will find there to the same purpose. It is Plain therefore, that, if the Poet does not do this, he does nothing. That all his Contrivance tends this way, and the very form and Design of his great Pains is, that we should be fashioned upon the modell he Sets us in his Hero ; that, like Him, We should be Smitten and charmed with Beautifull Faces, and adore them as if they were Divinities upon Earth ; In a word, that we should even be proud to sacrifice every thing to their Pleasure and service, Every thing except Glory and Fame, which hath Sometimes the Privilege of being reserved. But even this Honour, as they have managed the matter, is at least as dangerous an Object of our Love, as even Beauty it self. To talk then at the rate of this Author, and pretend, with his Discourse, that the Stage excites those passions Indirectly, and by Accident only, which it is it's main end and proper Business to raise ; and in the succesfull moving whereof all the commendation of the Poets and Players
 Skill

Skill consists, is to overthrow the first Principles of the *Drama* and to contradict all the Rules of this Art, and the Unanimous Voice of those Masters, that have pretended to excell or give directions in it.

It is yet farther all edged, and our Author makes use of the same Objection, in this matter, that even *History* it self, which is so grave and serious a method of Instruction, *makes use of such words, as express the Passions (even the Bible it Self not excepted;)* and that This labours to represent things in its way, as lively and movingly as Plays do, and endeavours that the Reader should be affected, and think himself concerned in the Good and evil Actions described there: But what a Gross mistake (if not what Perverseness and Sophistry rather) is this, to set these two upon the same foot ; to make no difference between the Art of representing Ill Actions so as to fill men with just horror and detestation of them ; and that of giving us such Images of the Agreeable Passions, as may recommend them to our Taste and create a sensible delight in, and Liking for them ? And, if even among Histories, any of them have so far degenerated from the dignity of their Character, as to pursue the same vile design with Plays, in moving the dangerous and deceitfull Passions ; Who is so blind, or so partiall, as not to see and own, that these

Pag.
XXIV, Fr.
74.

these ought to be degraded from the Title of Histories, and reckoned among Romances and such other Trompery, as have been the great Corruptors of mens Morals and Conversation ?

If the thing Plays aim at be not to cherish those, which men are pleased to call the soft and delicate Passions, though the bottom of them be exceeding gross and foul ; I would be glad to know, what is the Reason, that men find in themselves a greater disposition to be moved, and a more sensible pleasure from such Expressions of them , at that Age, when these Passions naturally ride highest. For whence Springs this delight if it be not (as St. *Augustine* observes) from hence, that then, and there *you see* you *even feel the exact resemblance*, the Incentives, the Growth of your own passions, the matter they feed upon, and all the secret Springs by which they are moved ? And what is all this, says the same good man, but a most deplorable Disease of the Mind, and an Evidence how wretchedly our Affections are depraved ? The Actors, who appears to us transported upon such Occasion are a Glas in which we see our own faces; each Spectator presently turns an Actor in the Tragedy, and plays over his own Passions, though insensible, and unseen : Tis manifest he does, from hence ; because all the Fiction and Personating

Conf. 3. 2.

nating upon the Stage is of it self cold and insipid, and never entertains us delightfully, till it have found within our selves some Reality, Which answers to that outward Resemblance. This is the true account, why these Pleasures are more languid and feeble as Men grow farther into Years, and betake themselves to a life of Gravity and serious Thoughts. We do not then receive the same Impressions, except we take pains to transport our selves into these Passions, by awakening remembrances of what we were in Youth : That season of Life, which is the most addicted to sense. And therefore, when Old men are thus affected, it is because they industriously blow up the dormant Sparks of that fire, which is very much abated and damped by Time, though it be not quite gone out.

If immodest Paintings do naturally convey into the mind the filthy Ideas of what they express, and for that reason are condemned, because no Beholder can relish all that a Masterly hand designed to express, without sharing in the Temper and Disposition of the painter, and imagining himself (as it were) in the postures he sees so drawn ; How much more vigorous must those Impressions be, which the Stage makes upon us, where every thing hath real Life and Action ; where we have not to do with

a dead pencill and dry Colours, but with living Persons, with reall Eyes burning with Love, or soft Glances sunk and overwhelmed with Passions; with real Tears in the Actors which likewise draw Tears from the Spectators. In short, with such true motions and gestures, as kindle and Scatter the same Sentiments all around, and set the Pit and Boxes on fire. And yet after all this you have the Confidence to tell us, that the Theatre, which dayly produces such effects, does not move the Passions naturally and industriously, but *indirectly* only and *by Chance*.

Why do you not proceed farther yet? for by the same reason you may pretend, that all those Discourses, which have a direct tendency to kindle these flames; that stir up young people to Love, (as if that age were not of it self sufficiently disposed to folly) that make them envy the Condition of Birds and Beasts, which have nothing to check or interrupt them in the pursuit and indulgence of their passions; and bewail very sadly the Importunate and troublesome Restraints, which Reason and Shame put upon these Gratifications of the Sensual Appetite; Why do you not I say, pretend that These and a hundred other things of the like nature, with which the Stage rings loudly every day, excite the Passions, by Accident only? When yet there is the most evident Demonstration.

on, that these things are purposely contrived and managed to move them ; that if they be defeated and miss of this end, the Rules of Art are broken and disappointed ; and both Poet and the Player have lost their Labour.

What, I beseech you, does an Actor in Effect, when he takes pains to play a Passion naturally, but use his utmost endeavours to revive and reinforce those Sentiments which he hath formerly felt, and from his own Experience, found to be Natural ; such as, if he were truly a Christian, he would long since have drowned in the Tears of Repentance, past the power of ever rising any more : or if they made any fresh attempt, they should not be remembered, but with Horrour ? Whereas now in order to the giving them a lively representation,, he must of necessity receive them with all their treacherous Graces, and envenomed Charms, and with great diligence work them up to such a pitch, as may Scatter their poyson, and render them contagious to all the Company.

But to This it is answered, That though all this be allowed to appear upon the Stage, yet it is all represented as a Weakness. I allow the Plea ; but desire him that urges it to answer me again, what Sort of Weakness it is there represented to be. Is it not a Weakness, which the Theatres labour to dignify and recommend as Something Great
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and Noble? Is it not such, as makes a part of their Character of Heroes and Heroines? Is it not a weakness so Nicely wrought, as even to be transformed into a Virtue, such as is admired, and applauded; such as is esteemed so essentiall to giving the world diversion, that no publick Entertainment will go down without it? But why do I say without it, when mens palates are so vitiated, as to tast nothing, not only where this is wanting, but where it does not govern in chief, and animate the whole Action?

You may proceed in your own method, and tell us if you please, that all this Pomp and Preparation does not *directly* and *in it's own nature* feed the flames of sensuall Desires; or, that Lust is not evil, and all that industry to cherish and inflame it hath nothing repugnant to Decency and Morality; or, that the Fire warms us *indirectly* and by *chance only*; that while the Softest and most moving expressions are nicely chosen, to represent the Passions of a furious Lover, all the warmth conveyed into the Audience by his wicked desires is purely *Casual*; You may tell us, that the Modesty of a Young Virgin is offended and violated by *Accident*; by all those passages, wherein One of her own Sex speaks of the Conflicts she hath *with Inclination*, where she confesses her *Virtue* vanquished, and owns her defeat to
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the Lover, whom she Submits to as her Conquerour. That which no where appears in common Conversation, That which even those, who yield in reality to this Weakness, take all imaginable pains to conceal, a young Lady, shall even learn, and be taught to glory in, in Plays. She shall see it practis'd, not only in Persons to whom the World make allowances, and expect no better from, but in Persons of topping Character; in those who are represented Modest, and Chast, and Virtuous, in Heroines, who are proposed for Patterns to others; And those Confessions of frailty, which People blush at in private, are thought fit to be Proclaimed to all the World; and, as if they were some surprising Excellence, carry the general applause of the Theatre before them.

I may reasonably presume, that what went before hath sufficiently demonstrated that Natural tendency to Vices, which the Representation of the Agreeable Passions hath in it; though nothing more were contained in this Argument, than only a Proof, that this cherishes and feeds, and designs and contrives with premeditated Industry to strengthen and countenance, that Concupiscence, which is the Principle and Cause of Vice in us. To all this it is reply'd, that in order to prevent this Affecti-

*V. Whether
the Modern
Plays have
Refined
Sensual
Love, by
making it
end in
Marriages;*

on from becoming sinful, the Theatre purifies and refines the Passion of Love. That, as the Stage is now-a-days reform'd, it hath consulted the Rules of Decency, and taken off all the gross, and filthy, and unlawful part of this Passion; and that it goes no farther, than an Innocent Liking and Inclination to Beauty, which concludes at last in honourable Marriage. Thus much then is granted us however; that, upon these Terms, all those infamous Prostitutions of Women, so frequent even in the Modern *Italian* Comedies, ought to be utterly banish'd from among Christians; and all those rank unlawful Amours in the Compositions of *Moliere*, will fall under the same Condemnation. They who argue thus, will find themselves obliged, by their own Principles, to disallow all those Discourses, in which this rigorous Censurer of the Great Canons, this grave Reformer of the Airs and Expressions of our *Belles*, does yet openly avow the Principles of a Scandalous Toleration in the easie Husbands, and solicites the Wives to take a shameful revenge upon their jealous Husbands. He hath let the World see, what benefit they are to expect from the Morals of the Stage, who only falls foul upon the Follies, and exposes the Ridiculous Fopperies of Mankind, and suffers in the mean while all their Vice and Debaucheries

See *Moliere's Precienfis Ridicules*, Vol. 1.

Debaucheries to pass without any Contempt or Reproach. Posterity, 'tis probable, will hear what End this Comick Poet made, who was seiz'd with his last Fit of Sicknefs, as he was Acting his own *Malade Imaginaire*, or *Medecin Malgre luy*, and died in the space of few hours after. Thus this Unhappy Man passed from the Diversions and Buffooneries of a Theatre, where he drew almost his last Breath; to the Dreadful Judgment Seat, of him who hath pronounced, *Wo unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep.* They that have left the Noblest Monuments of Wit behind them, shall not be able to escape or shelter themselves from the Justice of God: Neither the most Ingenious Poems, nor the most Charming Musick will be regarded by Him; nor will He spare such, as have, by these or any other Methods, promoted Sensuality and Vice. Nor will it be a sufficient Plea in bar to his Righteous Judgment, for you, Sir, whoever you be, who undertake to vindicate Plays upon so frivolous a Pretence as this, that they commonly end in Marriage. For however you may, in outward appearance, take off that filthy and unlawful part, which would provoke shame in the Representations of Prophane Love; yet is it not possible really to be separated from it upon the Stage.

Luke 6.

1 Joh. 2.
15. 16.

Manage it never so dextrously gild it over as artificially as can be, and call it by what Name you please, still at the bottom 'tis neither better nor worse, than that *Lust of the Flesh*; Which, when St. *John* forbids Men to Love, he does, by Parity of Reason, forbid Men to recommend it Studiously to the Love of others. That gross part which you boast of removing, we are not at all beholding to you for; it is what would provoke abhorrence, if you suffer'd it to appear; and therefore, even the Cunning of keeping it out of Sight is but the more mischievous still: The Covering you put upon it does but engage Mens Wills with greater Address; and the more refined the Passion is, the more dangerous and subtle is the Infection. You do not, I am confident, believe in good earnest, that the Contagion of a Mortal Disease cannot be spread without a gross Object; or that the secret flames of a Heart, too much dispos'd to Love in any way, or upon any provocation whatsoever, are at all corrected or abated by the Idea of such Marriages as you present us with, in the Persons of your Amorous fine Gentlemen and Ladies. If this be your opinion, you are extreamly mistaken. You should not indeed, upon this Occasion, bring me under an unavoidable necessity of enlarging in the Explanation of such things,

as it were much better never to have thrown away one single thought upon ; and well for the World if they never entred into Mens heads at all. But, since you fancy, that all is made up by this Decency of Marriage at last, I must be free to tell you, that this Stratagem does you little or no service in the present case. Passion can fix upon none but it's proper Object; and therefore when Amours are represented, the Provoking of Sensuality must needs be the Result of them. Marriage admits of many things in private, without the least Reproach, which nothing but the most hardened Impudence would bear to have made publick. And if that Sacred Name had been sufficient to protect all the instances even of Conjugal Affection, *Isaac* and *Rebecca* needed not have taken such pains to conceal their innocent Pleasures, and the mutual Testimonies of their chaste and virtuous Fondness. My meaning is, that even things, which in themselves are lawful, are yet sometimes so far from preventing their contrary, as even to excite and produce it. In a word, whatever comes by reflection does not extinguish that which proceeds from Instinct ; and a Man may venture to affirm, that some secret attempts are made upon Modesty and Chastity by all those Passages, which move our Sensual Affections,

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Affections, even in those Plays which are least liable to Reproach. It matters not whether this Attack be made in close fight, or at a distance; whether the Place be Bomb'd, or the Walls Scal'd; the taking of the Town is the end of both. That natural byass, which draws Mens hearts to Corruption, begins presently to surrender to the first Impressions of Sensual Love; The Remedy, which Reflection or Marriage administer, comes too late: The Breach is made, and the feeble side of the Heart assaulted, if not already absolutely vanquish'd: And that tying the Marriage-Knot, 'tis plain, is a matter too grave and serious, to work an Audience up into any delightful Passion. People come thither for Pleasure, and, since the Poet cannot propose to give it them by so solemn a matter as this, 'tis plain, that Marriage is brought into Plays, not as any part of the main design of Writing or Acting them, but purely for form and fashion's sake, and to give their Amours a little better Colour to the World.

I will go farther yet; and venture to say, that when moving the Passions is the thing aimed at, That which is lawful is flat and distastful, and the unlawful only hath Charms, and a grateful Relish. If *Terence's Eunuchus* had begun with a fair
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and regular Demand of *Pamphila* (or whatsoever else the Idol of his affections had been) for his Wife ; Would the House, think you, have been transported to that degree, the Author intended and labour'd that they should? By no means. The share of that young Man's happiness, which fell to the Spectators, would have been much less, if it had not been unexpected, Surprising, nay forbidden, and carried by force. And, if the Modern Comedies do not introduce such Rapes as that was, yet they raise Imagination of other things no less dangerous in their Consequences. And These are the Violences they commit upon the Heart, when they endeavour to draw it over, and get it into their power, without considering, whether they have any right to dispose of it, or whether the Desire thus excited be not carried beyond their just Bounds. So that, upon the whole matter, the Spectator cannot be entertained to his mind, who comes thither merely for pleasure and delight, unless in some part or other of the Representation, the true Rules and Measures of Virtue be despised and set aside. That which is Lawfull and Regular, without a mixture of something else, would pall his Appetite, and prove insipid. In short, The main design of all Plays, according to the Modell of the present age, is to inspire the Pleasure

of Love. You look upon the Characters, not as Persons that marry, but as persons Courting, and addressing, and fond of one another; and the Quality the Spectators covet to be in, is not that of Husband or Wife, but that of Lover or Mistress, and, without considering what becomes of them in the Conclusion, they attend only to the Raptures and pleasing Passions they see them in at present.

VI. *What the Marriages of the Stage really are.*

But I have yet in reserve another Reason, more weighty and more peculiarly Christian, why the Passion of Love ought not to be thus exposed to publick view, and set off with all its allurements, no not even then, when it hath no prospect or relation to any End, but such as is lawfull. And that (as a Modern Author in his Treatise upon Plays, hath ingeniously observed) is This, That all Mariage presupposes Concupiscence, and such Inclinations, as according to the Precepts of the Gospell it is our duty to resist, and, by consequence, such as we should use our best endeavours to arm every Christian against. This is an Evil, which (according to *St. Augustin*) Vice and Debauchery make an ill use of, Marriage converts to a good Use, and a state of Virginity and Continence excell in forbearing to use at all. Now He, that publickly exposes and recommends that sensible Impression

De Nupr. et Conc. l. VII. II. XXI ont. Jul. III. 21.

of Beauty which compells and provokes men to Love, though this be done in order to Marriage, yet, at the same time that he labours to render such Impression agreeable, he does also render Concupiscence agreeable, and supports Sense in its Rebellion against Reason and Religion. For what can be a more evident instance of this, than to take away both the Power and the Disposition to oppose that Ascendant of the affection, to which Plays constantly enslave even the greatest and most Noble minds? These soft and invincible Byasses of the Inclination, as they are represented upon the Stage, are the very things, which the Poets labour to make Men sensible and fond of. Which is, in plain Terms, to make them in Love with a Slavery, that both is the effect of Sin, and leads directly to Sin; And thus they cherish and strengthen a Passion, which can never be subdued but by painfull conflicts; which costs good men many a bitter sigh and Tear, even in the midst of all those Remedies they are furnished with, and carefully employ, against it. Let us not then expatiate upon this Subject, the Consequences of it are full of horror: I shall only add, that those Marriages, which are either broken or made up in Plays, are very distant things from that of *Tobias and Sarah*, *We are the Children of the Saints*, and ought not to come together

*Tob. viii.
7.*

ther like the Heathen. And now I take not this my sister for lust, but uprightly. How cold and dull would such a Marriage as This, where sense does not govern, appear upon the Stage! How entirely sensuall are all the Matches made up there! How Scandalous to true and sober Christians! The Evil and Unclean part is what they drive at, What they call noble Passions are the reproach of our Reasonable Nature. The absolute sovereignty of a false and frail Beauty, that Usurpation and Tyranny, which they set off and trick up in it's best colours, flatters the Vanity of One Sex, disparages and degrades the Dignity of the Other, and brings Both into Subjection to the Dominion of appetite and sense.

VII. The
Authors
words, and
the Advan-
tage he
makes of
Confessi-
ons.

Pag. XX.
XXII Fr.
38.

But the most dangerous Passage in this Discourse is that, where the Author endeavours to prove the Harmlessness of the Stage by Arguments drawn from Experience. There are, (he tells us) Three very easy ways, of knowing what is done at the Theatres, and I (says he) acknowledge, that I have made use of all Three. The First is, to inform ones self of it by Men of Parts and Probity, who out of that Horror they have to Sin, would not allow themselves to be present at those sort of shows, if Sinfull. The Next is, to judge, by the Confessions of those who go thither, of the evil Effects which Plays produce upon their minds. And this

this is a surer method than the Former, because there could be no greater Accusation of them, than that which comes out of the mouth of Persons guilty and selfcondemned. *The Third is the Reading of the Plays,* which is not forbidden, as the Representation of them may have been. *And I protest* (proceeds he) *that I have not, by any of these ways, been able to discover the least appearance of the Excesses, which the Fathers with so much Justice condemned in Plays.* Here you have a man urging matter of Fact, and appealing, not to his own Experience alone, but to that of the most and best men, nay to almost all Mankind. *A world of People,* he tells us, *of eminent Virtue and of a very nice, not to say* *Scrupulous, Conscience, have been forced to own,* *that Plays on the French Theatre are at present so pure, that there is nothing in them, which can offend the Chastest Ear.*

At this rate, if we may credit this Author, even Confession, which discloses all sins, can discover no fault in the Playhouse, And he assures us, with a Confidence and solemnity that would even make a Good man tremble, that he hath never been able to discern any footsteps of that pretended malignity, nor of those Vices which are charged upon Plays, as their proper Source and Cause. It seems those of the Female Singers and Actors, and their Keepers and Gal-

VIII. *The open and secret Faults in Plays. Dangerous and unseen Dispositions. Concupiscence Scattered through all the Senses.*

Prov. VII.
IO. 21

Gallants did not at present recur to his Thoughts: and he quite forgot that Precept left us by Solomon, to avoid those Women, who wear the Attire of Harlots, and are Subtle in heart, who lye in wait to destroy Souls, who cause men to yield with much fair Speech, and force them with the flattering of their Lips, such as their Discourses, their Songs, their Rehearsals. So that men throw themselves into their Snares, as a Bird hasteth to the Net. And is there no fault in arming Women that profess Christianity, against feeble and unwary Souls? to put into their hands those darts, which Strike through the heart? to Devote and sacrifice them to publick Lewdness, after a more dangerous manner, than is done even in those Places, which Decency will not suffer us to mention? What Mother, (I do not say who hath a due regard to Christianity, but) who is not utterly lost to all sense of Decency and Reputation, would not rather choose to see a Daughter in her Grave, than upon the Stage? What! Hath she been at the Expence of so much Trouble and Tenderneſs in her Education, to see her, after all that Care, engage in a Livelihood of so much Scandal? Hath she kept her night and day under her wings, as it were, to shelter her from Temptation, and is the fruit of all her pains come to this at last, to have

have her made common, and set up for a snare to Youth? Who does not look upon these wretched Christians, (if They may be allowed that Title still, who live in such barefaced contradiction to their Baptismal Vows) who I say looks upon them under any other Character than that of Slaves, and Prostitutes, and such as have utterly extinguished all remains of Modesty and Shame? For such we must esteem them, though they were guilty of nothing else but industriously drawing so many Eyes upon them. For even This is monstrous and unnaturall, in Persons, whose very Sex had consecrated them to Modesty and Reserve; and whose naturall Weakness requires the safe retreat of a well ordered Family. And yet even These expose themselves in a full Play-house with all the pomp of Vanity; like those Sirens, which *Isaiah* says, take up their Dwelling in the Temples of Pleasure; whose Looks are armed with Death, and who take back again the Poyson scattered by their Voices, returned in the Applauses which the Company give their Performances. And is there no Blame due, no Concern requisite to the Spectators; who reward these Wretches Luxury, and make it a gain to them; who Support them in their Corruption of manners; who expose their own Hearts as a Prey to them; and go to be taught by such

such precious Instructors, things which they ought to continue for ever ignorant of? If there be Nothing in all This; which breaks in upon the Measures of Decency, and Good report; if nothing which is fit to be brought with men to Confession, I cannot but lament, that such stupidity and blindness should prevail among Christians: But especially, What an Amazement is it, that a man should use the Title of Priest, that he might with the more authority, and certain effect, deliver Christians from those poor remains of Remorse, which the World hath not yet utterly lost for such Extravagancies?

P. XXII.
Fr. 40.

You tell us, you do not find by Confession, that *the Rich who frequent the Theatres are the greatest Sinners, and that the Guilt of their Lives is pretty equal with the Poor who never saw a Play.* Why do you not compleat the Argument, by adding farther, that Luxury, and Effeminacy, and Idleness, and the Excess and exquisite Delicacy of high feeding, and the anxious pursuit of Pleasures in every thing they do, are not at all injurious to the Rich, because the Poor, whose Condition sets them at a distance from these Temptations, are equally depraved with love of Pleasures? Are not you sensible, Sir, that there are some things, which, thought they do not visibly produce the ill Effects mentioned here, do yet infuse some secret dis-

dispositions of very mischievous consequence, though these dispositions do not always break out into act, nor betray all their malignity presently? Whatever feeds and inflames the Passions is of this kind. And a man, who made due enquiry into the state of his Soul, and examined all the lurking Causes of evil there, would find abundant matter for Confession, in things of this nature, He that can find, what that is in man, that gives birth to sensual Pleasure, and that restless and wandering Disposition, which is more easily felt than described, which flies at every thing and fixes no where, would discover there the secret source of the greatest Sins. This *St. Augustin* was sensible of in the beginning of his Youthfull Passions, when he said of himself, *I was not yet* Conf. III.
in love, but I was inclined, and thought it a fine thing, to be so. He sought out, as he goes on, some snare, in which he might both take, and be taken! He found that sort of Life, where there were none of these Snares, troublesom and insupportable to him. Now every thing in this world is thick set with these nets; He was caught according to his hearts desire: And then it was, that he felt himself intoxicated with the pleasure of Plays, Because in Them he found
 I II 2.
the Representation of his own Misery, and fresh fuel for his flames. His Example and Doctrine

trine instructs us, what ends Plays are serviceable to; How natural a Tendency there is in them to cherish these secret Dispositions in mens minds: whether this Brat of Sensuall Love be already brought to Maturity, or whether it be in Embryo only, and not yet come to the Birth. *St. James* hath explained to us these two different Conditions of our Hearts, in those very remarkable and significant Words. Ch: 1. 14, 15. *Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own Lust, and enticed. Then, when Lust hath conceived it bringeth forth Sin, and Sin, when it is is finished, bringeth forth Death.* Thus the Apostle hath been carefull to distinguish, between the *Conceiving of Sin* and the *Bringing it forth*. He makes a difference between the Disposition to Sin, and the compleat Formation of it by a full Consent of the Will. When it arrives to this last estate, then according to *St James* his notion, it *bringeth forth Death*, and becomes perfectly Mortall. But the Consequence of this Distinction is by no means, that even the first Beginnings of Sin are Innocent; From the instant that a man adheres never so little to the first Complacencies of Sensuall motions, he begins to open his heart and engage his affections, to the Creature; When once those Motions are indulged and cherished by agreeable Representations, there is a helping hand

hand lent to bring this unlawful Issue forward to the Birth; And a prudent Confessor, who hath the skill to make a Christian sensible of the first wounds given to his Conscience, and of the wretched Consequences of a Danger which he is fond of, would by such timely care and wise conduct prevent a world of Sin and Misery.

According to St. *Augustine's* sense of the matter, this fatal Concupiscence spreads itself over the whole Man. It runs, if I may so say, through every Vein, and sinks in as deep as the Marrow in his Bones. It is a poysonous Root, which stretches itself to every Organ of Sense, his Ears, his Eyes, his every part that is capable of letting in Pleasure, feels the effect of it. His Senses upon this occasion lend a mutual assistance; the Delight of the one draws on and cherishes that of the other; and this Union, or Conspiracy rather, makes up a Chain, that draws him down into the bottomless pit of Sin. We must, as this good Man directs, take good heed in considering the Operation of our Senses, to distinguish between the Necessity, the Usefulness, the Quickness and lively Impression of the Sensation, and the engaging our Affections in the Pleasures of Sense. Of these four Qualities observable in the Senses, the

Cont.
Tul. ii.
14. Conf.
10. 31. et
seq.

Three former are the Work of God that made us. The necessity of Sensation proves it self by external Objects striking upon our Senses every moment. The Usefulness of them (continues the same Father) we feel particularly in the Taste, which is serviceable to us in the choice of Food, and makes provision for our Digesting it. The lively Impression, or Quickness of our Senses consists in their readiness to Act, or be Acted upon, and in the subtle Contexture of their proper Organs. These three Qualities we owe to God, as their true and only Cause. But it is in the midst of this Divine Frame, that the forcible Inclination to Pleasures of Sense, and it's unruly Byass, (*that is* that evil Concupiscence brought upon us by sin) erects it's Throne. And this it is, (*says St. Augustin*) which is an Enemy to Wisdom, the Source and Spring of Corruption and Vice, and the Bane of our Virtues. The Five Senses are Five Avenues, by which it goes out and ranges over their several Objects ; and through which it receives Impressions from without. But this Father hath shewed, that it is the same throughout, because in every Organ, there is the same bewitching Charm of Pleasure, the same Intractableness of the Senses, the same Captivity of the Heart, the same Fondness for sensible Objects. So
that

that at what Part soever the Impression is made, the Effect is communicated to the whole Frame. Shews sieze the Eyes; soft moving Language, and passionate Airs of Musick pierce the Heart through the Ears: Sometimes the Corruption flows in like a full Tide, and at Other times it infills it self gently, and by Drops; but either way the Man is effectually Drowned at last. The Disease is in the Blood, and lurks within in the Bowels, before it flames out, and betrays any symptoms of a Fever outwardly. By losing Strength gradually, a Man is in danger of falling, before he is actually down; and this Weakening of the Parts that should enable him to Stand, is in effect the beginning of his Fall.

He is but a very indifferent Physician, who knows no Indispositions in Men, but such as are actually felt, and plainly discover themselves. The case of our Souls is thus far the same with our Bodies; there are Many Distempers, which we are not presently sensible of, because they are not grown to such a height as to discover themselves: and Others there are, of which we are never sensible at all; because length of Time and Custom have made them Habitual to us; or else they are grown to such an Extremity, as even Stupifies us; and is the beginning of Death, which destroys all

Sensation in us. And this detects the Fallacy of that Argument so usual in behalf of Plays. When we blame These as dangerous, the Men of the Wor'd presently take Sanctuary (with the Author of *the Discourse*) in solemn Proteſtations, that they have never found any Danger in them. Urge them a little farther, and they will not scruple to say as much of Nudities, and that, not only in Pictures, but even in living Men and Women. They fall foul upon those Divines, who Preach against these things, and reprove Women for them. They pretend these Zealots have a stronger Genius this way than their Neighbours; and that, by this extraordinary Niceness, they betray either too great Weakness, or too quick a Sense of such matters. For their own parts, they profess that They have no such Idea's, nor feel any indecent Impressions. And to avoid Wrangling, I am content for once to take their Word. But how comes all this to pass? Even from hence, That they are not careful to Observe, or are gone so far as not to be sensible of, their Ruine. 'Tis like a Drowning Man under Water, who feels no weight in the water any longer when once he is out of his Depth. And to continue this Metaphor, and apply it to Beginners; 'Tis certain, that men do not perceive the strength of
of

of the Stream, but when they strive against it. If they suffer themselves to drive down with the Current, they feel nothing but a smooth pleasing motion perhaps at first, which carries them easily along ; but the danger and mischief is concealed, till within a little while after, they sink and Perish. Let us not then be govern'd in these cases by the Opinions of such men, by taking things thus upon Trust ; nor measure Evils and Dangers by Their Sense of them : Since there are many and fatal Mischiefs, which long Custom, and a corrupt Conversation, and the Error of a sick Imagination, and Partiality to Themselves and their Pleasures, keep them ignorant and insensible of.

As to those Persons of *Parts and Probity*, who (the Author of this Discourse assures us) do, *without the least scruple*, frequent Plays ; I vehemently suspect, that their Probity is of no better a stamp, than that of the Wise Men of this World, who scarce know, and do not much trouble themselves to consider, whether they be Christians in good earnest or no ; such as think they have discharged their Duty in every point, when they live like what they call *Men of Honour* ; when they wrong and cheat no body else, though at the same time they most grossly injure and deceive themselves, by giving a loose to their Passions and their Pleasures.

These

P. XXI.

Fr. 38.

IX. That

they who

go to Plays

ought to

apprehend

not only the

danger, but

the scandal

of it.

Math. 11
25.

These are of the same kind with those *Wise and Prudent*, from whom our blessed Saviour declares, that *the Mysteries of his Kingdom were hid, when they were revealed only to the Humble and Babes*, such as tremble and start at the least Passages, which tend to kindle or to feed impure Desires. Yet These, the Author passes his word, are persons of eminent Virtue; and he counts them by Hundreds and Thousands. How happy a man is he, to have had so many excellent people come under his Care, and to find the *strait way* so mightily thronged! A world of People (he affirms) of eminent Virtue, and of a very Nice, not to say Scrupulous, Conscience, approve our Plays, and frequent them without any trouble or check. These are, it seems, invulnerable Souls, that can spend whole days in the midst of moving Songs and Poetry; and hear a thousand tender and passionate things, without being in the least affected with them: But the Persons of so eminent Virtue, do not hear, or do not regard, that Advice of St. Paul, *Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall*. They do not know, it seems, that allowing their Strength to be so great, as to make them proof against any Danger, which might happen to themselves, yet they may, and ought to, be exceedingly afraid for the Scandal they give to Others.

For

For this is another very grave and solemn Expostulation of the same Apostle; *Wherefore dost thou set at nought, and offend thy weak Brother? Destroy not him by thy Example, for whom Christ dyed.* They do not observe what the same St. Paul hath declared, that the guilt of *Them who take Pleasure in,* and consent to wicked things, is equal with theirs who do them. These so *exceeding Nice and Scrupulous* persons, do not find themselves at all concerned in these Rules of Conscience. Which, to confess a truth, increases my Suspicion, that they are such sort of scrupulous Consciences, as those, who *Strained hard at a Gnat, and swallowed a Camel.* Or else, that our Author hath made up a new fashioned convenient sort of Virtues; and cut these eminent Persons after some pattern of his own contriving, Such as think matters may be accommodated between the World and Jesus Christ, and that they may very well serve and belong to both at the same time.

Rom. 14

Rom. 1. 32.

Matth. 23.

The Dangers men run themselves into by frequenting Plays, he compares to such, as * *we must even fly to Desarts to avoid,* (he proceeds) *For we cannot walk a Step, read a Book, enter a Church, or live in the World, without meeting with a thousand things capable of exciting the Passions.* The Consequence of this Argument is admirable. Every place

X. The Dangers men court distinguished from those they cannot avoid.

* Pag. 24.

Fr. 46.

Maxims and Reflections

is full of unavoidable Dangers, *therefore* we shall do well to add to the Number. There is not any Creature but is a Snare and Temptation to Man; *therefore* he is allowed to employ his Wit and Pains to invent new Temptations, and set new Traps to catch Souls. S. Paul hath told us there are some Vices and Dangers in Conversation, which, wholly to keep ourselves from associating with, a man must abandon all Company, and *even go out of the World*; consequently there is no sin in chusing, and industriously seeking out such Companions: And this Apostle was mistaken, or put us into a very groundless fear, when he told us, that *Evil Communications corrupt good Manners*. This is the natural, the notable Conclusion from our worthy Author's Premises. All Objects whatsoever, which present themselves to our sight, have a power of exciting the Passions, *therefore* we should add our Indeavours to put our Ruine past a doubt, by making this Power effectual, and strengthening it's Operation: We should set our Wits on work to provide Objects more exquisitely fitted for this purpose than Nature hath done; and disguise our Passions to excite them the more vehemently, and render them more taking: And Plays, which abound with more and greater Dangers, in proportion as they are more

arti-

1 Cor. 5.
16.

1 Cor. 15.
33.

artificially Composed and Acted, ought by no means to be reckoned among those *Evil Communications which corrupt good Manners*. Methinks you should rather infer the contrary way; and any man of common Ingenuity, would argue thus. There are many Dangers in the World, which even by our utmost care and caution we cannot avoid, *therefore* we should keep the stricter guard upon our selves; we should avoid as many of them as possibly we can, and by no means create new Dangers, nor perish by those of our own seeking. God will give us his assistance in all those Difficulties and Hazards, which Necessity brings upon us; but those who chuse and court them, he easily forsakes, and abandons them to their own perverse Choice. *He that loveth danger*, says the wise Son of *Sirach*, he does not say, *He that falls into it*, and cannot help it, but *he that loves*, and casts himself voluntarily into it, *shall perish therein*.

Eccles. 3.
26.

This Author, that he might leave no stone unturn'd, alledges also the * Laws in favour of his Argument, and pretends, that Plays, if they were evil, would not be suffer'd to be Acted; nor would Men, who have any regard or conscience for the Laws, frequent them. But here again he forgets, that the great † Casuist, whose Authority

*XI. Whether the
Laws
ought to be
alleged in
favour of
Plays.
*P.XXIII
Fr. 39.*

† *Tb. Aqu.*
1. 2. q. 39.
3 *ad.* 3. q.
96. 2. c.

* *Ep. ad Aur.*
22. n. 5.
Ol. 64.

† *Rit. de*
Paris. p.
108. 114.

thority he hath abused, hath delivered his Judgment, that Humane Laws are not obliged to suppress all sorts of Evils, but such only as tend directly to the Detriment of Humane Society. Nay, even the Church it self, Saint *Augustine* *, acquaints us, *Exercises the severity of her Censures, not upon all sinners, but only upon a few, whose offences are the most enormous and scandalous*: Upon this very account she Condemns them who Act Plays, and in so doing, thinks the Plays Acted by them sufficiently condemned. This Point is positively determined in the * *Rituals*, and the Practice of it is constantly observed. Those that make Playing their business, are debarred the Sacraments, and not admitted to Communicate, either in their Life-time, or at the point of Death, except they Solemnly renounce and forsake their Trade. We pass them by at the Holy Table, and look upon them as Men in a State of Notorious and Mortal Sin. We exclude them from Holy Orders, as Infamous Persons; and, by necessary consequence, deny them the Offices of the Church, and Christian Burial when they dye. As for those, who frequent Plays, in regard Their Guilt admits of different degrees, and some among them are more Innocent than others; (many perhaps being such as rather need better Instru-

Instruction than deserve Censure and Re-
proof) they do not come up to the same
pitch of Wickedness, and consequently
ought not all to be treated with the same
Severity. But it does not by any means fol-
low from hence, that publick Dangers
ought to be countenanced and authorized.
If men are not duly sensible how dangerous
these things are, it is the Priest's duty to
inform them better, but not to cherish and
support them in their Ignorance, and Insen-
sibility. The Vindicators of Shews, as long
since as St. *Chrysostoms* time, have made a
mighty Clamour, as if the *putting these* Hom. 38.
things down, were in effect to overthrow the in Matth.
Laws: But for all that, this holy Father
peremptorily declared, that the Spirit and
Temper of the Law was perfectly oppo-
site to that of the Theatres. But We, in
our days have a great deal more to urge a-
gainst them: Since there are so many pub-
lick Decrees against Plays, which others
have made particular mention of in their
Writings upon this Subject. If Custom
bear those Laws down, and the Abuse pre-
vail still, notwithstanding such care taken
to correct and suppress it, the only Infe-
rence arising from hence is, That Plays
ought to be reckoned amongst those obsti-
nate Evils, which, a famous Historian ob-
serves,

serves, are always Prohibited, and yet always Practised. But after all, Suppose that the Civil Constitution did Countenance, and even Authorise Plays; Allowing, that, instead of casting a Blemish, and setting a mark of Reproach upon Players, which yet hath been ever done, they were favourable to them; yet sure the whole Order of the Priesthood should think it becoming every one of Them, to imitate the Example of the *Chrysostoms*, and the *Augustines*. The Laws of Civil Sanction have not been able to root out utterly the sin and mischief of Usury and Divorce, and yet those great Men constantly and boldly maintained, That, what allowance soever the World gave to these Crimes, they ought nevertheless to be avoided, and were Condemned by another superiour Law, even that of the Gospel, which no Countenance of the Civil Power to the contrary could dispense with. They declared, that even that Usury, which was esteemed Lawful, because Authorised by the *Roman* Laws, was yet unlawful because not agreeable to the Laws of Jesus Christ: And, that the Constitution of the Holy City, and that of the World and Secular Power, were very different things.

XII. OF
the Authority of the
Fathers.

I have no design here to enter particularly into the several passages of the
Fa-

Fathers upon this Occasion, nor lengthen out my Discourse beyond it's intended compass, by enlarging upon so Copious a Subject. I shall only say, that it argues that Man to have read them very negligently and superficially, whoever he be, that shall (with this * Author) take upon him to affirm, that the only thing they find fault with, in the Shews and publick Entertainments of their Times, is the Idolatry and scandalous Impurities of them. A man must have stopped his Ears very hard against the voice of Truth, not to be convinced, that their Arguments reach a great way farther. They are levelled against the Unprofitableness of Sports and Play-Houses, they blame them for the prodigious Extravagance, the Hurry, the Commotion, and unsettled state of Mind they create, so very disagreeable to the Character of a Christian, whose calm Breast ought to be the very seat and sanctuary of Peace it self. They reprove the vehement raising of the Passions, the Vanity, the Dressing, the Garish Ornaments, which they reckon among the Poms abjured in Baptism : They condemn that desire of Seeing and being Seen, which draws both Sexes thither ; The unhappy meeting of those Eyes which look out for one another ; The too great Thought and Time thrown away
upon

* Pag. 16.
&c.

upon Trifle and Vanity ; The loud Peals of Laughter, and disorderly Mirth, which make men forget the Presence of God, the dreadful Account to be given even for one's least, and seemingly insignificant, Words and Actions ; and in short, that all the Gravity and Composedness requisite in the Life of a Christian, is ruffled and scattered by such Entertainments. Proceed Sir, as you have begun, and tell us, That the Fathers do not condemn all these things, nor all that vile collection of Evils and Temptations, which all meet together in the Theatres, as their common Rendezvous. Perswade us, that they do not pass any Censure even on things blameless in their own Nature, when they have Evil couched under them, and serve to introduce it. Affirm with your wonted grace, that St. *Augustine* hath not Lamented that revelling of the Passions, and that contagious manner of expressing the Diseases of the Soul, those Tears which so lively a Representation drawes from our eyes, those Corruptions in us, and all that other Delusion in Plays, which he stigmatizes with the Name of Miserable Folly. And now I would be glad to know, who is able to lift up his Heart to God, in the midst of all that hurry and discomposure of the Affections, in which the pleasure of Plays intirely

intirely consists ? Who can have the Forehead to say, that he comes thither for God's sake, or to do Him Service ? Who would not be afraid, in the midst of so many foolish Joys and Grievs, to lose and stifle quite the Spirit of Prayer ; and indispose one's Mind by such dangerous Interruptions for that Exercise, which Jesus Christ hath told us ought to be our continual Employment ? For when he says, * *We should Pray always*, Luke 18 he certainly means thus much at least, that we preserve a constant Disposition for it, and have our hearts duly prepared, and do that in Desire and habitual Inclination, which we cannot do in outward Act. All these reasons, and a great many more which I forbear to mention, my Reader may be assured are to be found in the Fathers. And if we would follow them farther, and search into the Principles and Ground of their moral Exhortations, What Condemnation can be so severe, which we do not there find passed upon that Spirit and Temper of Mind, which disposes men to publick Shews ? Since (not to instance at present in all the other Mischiefs they are attended with) miserable men repair hither, for no other purpose so much, as to stupify their Consciences, to cease from serious Thinking, and to forget themselves ; to break loose from, or to quiet the Persecution

cution of that inexorable uneasiness of heart, which lyes at the bottom of all they do and feel, and imbitters their Lives, from the time that they have once lost all true relish for, and delight in, God.

The being present at publick Shews, and Processions, Muscal Entertainments and other Rejoycings is frequently forbidden to the Clergy; and the Regulations in this point are infinite, such as we need not trouble ourselves, or the Reader, with a Collection of. But if we would make a right Judgment, whether the Mischiefs and Dangers which the Laws take notice of, be such as extend only to Church-men, or whether All the People in general are not equally concerned to beware of them; we shall do well closely to consider those Reasons, upon which such Prohibitions to the Clergy proceed. Let us, for Example, observe that Canon of the Council of Tours, from whence it hath been transferred into the Capitularies of our Kings. *Ab omnibus quæcunq; ad aurium et oculorum pertinent illecebras, unde Vigor animi emolliri posse credatur quod de aliquibus generibus Musicorum, alijsq; nonnullis rebus sentiri potest, Dei Sacerdotes abstinere debent. Quia per Aurium Oculorumq; illecebras turba vitiorum ad animum ingredi solet.* That is; The Ministers of God ought to abstain from all those things, which

which are contrived to charm the Ears and Eyes by such allurements to Pleasure, as may reasonably be supposed apt to soften and break the Vigour of the Mind. (Which is manifestly the Effect of some sorts of Musical Compositions, and several other things made for Diversion and Delight) Because through these Allurements of the Ears and Eyes a multitude of Vices are wont to make their way into the Soul. This Canon does not suppose any such thing as Obscene Talk, Wanton Behaviour, or Notorious Incontinence, or Licentiousness in the Shews it blames; but thinks it sufficient to fix upon the evil Consequence, and the natural Effect, of such delightful Entertainments, whereby the Eyes and Ears are Charmed. And this it says, in loose Musick, is a certain softness and Effeminacy, and in the Objects of Sight, something for which I want a Name; by means whereof, the masculine Vigour of the Soul is insensibly Blunted and Enervated. And the ill effect of indulging these Gayeties could not have been better expressed, than by saying, That they open a passage for, and let in a numerous Rabble of Vices. Here are no Particulars specified, and perhaps it would not be easy sometimes to instance upon what determinate thing, or part of such Entertainments the Evil is chargeable. It is enough, that the Whole

E taken

taken together, and in general, is full of Danger ; that a man may find from these things, weak and vicious Thoughts insinuated into his Mind by subtle and imperceptible ways ; That these feed, and feast, and strengthen that inward Disposition, which emasculates the Soul, and opens the Heart to all sensible Objects. A man in such cases does not very well know what he would be at, but he knows thus much, that he could be glad always to live a life of Sense, and to pass his time in Entertainments, whither people come purely for Pleasure ; where the Actor's Business is to give, and the Spectator's to receive, all the Delight they can. And if this be the Condition of other publick Shews, what shall we think, what Centure ought we to pass upon those, where long Conversations are made up of all the tender, engaging Expressions, set off with Verse and Numbers, Voices and Gestures, melting Airs, and in a word, All that can be capable of inflaming the Passions, and enfeeble the Powers of the reasonable Mind ? This Disposition is Evil in any sort of men whatsoever ; and therefore the care to fence against, and keep one's self clear of it, does not concern Church-men only ; but the Church, in mentioning These particularly, intends by them to teach all Christians in general their Duty,

Duty, and to warn them of a Danger common to all Mankind.

I expect it will be Objected, that This is carrying matters to an unreasonable height, and, that in consequence of such Principles, a very great part of those publick and private Diversions both, which are commonly called Innocent, ought to be suppressed. I shall not engage in any Disquisitions of this kind, which cannot be satisfied without considering a great number of Circumstances peculiar to each Case. It is sufficient to have taken notice, what a particular Malignity there is in such publick Meetings, where the great design of Them, whose work it is to entertain the Company, is to give them Satisfaction by any manner of means they can ; And, in pursuance of this Design, they constantly aim at flattering and soothing up their sensual Inclinations in some respect or other. And whither, on the other hand, men resort in expectation of being thus received. The whole House Claps loudly, when they find this done ; they look upon it as a mark of good Sense and Breeding, to shew themselves very sensible, and very discerning, in these matters : It is a point of Honour to exercise their Passion and Pleasure at every thing designed to affect and debauch them ; And a Man, who refuses to shew himself as

Mad, and as much bewitched, as the rest of the Company, is lookt upon as Morose and Ill-humoured. Thus, besides the other Inconveniences of these publick Meetings for Pleasure; the Persons present spur up, and as it were, warrant and give credit to one another's Extravagancies, by joining in full Consort with the general Applauses and Acclamations; and even the Air it self is Tainted with this universal Infection.

I need not, after this, trouble my self to disprove those Consequences, which are drawn in favour of the People, from these Prohibitions in certaiu cases, wherein the Clergy only are mentioned. This is a Fallacy like that of certain Doctors, who put such a construction upon the Canons which forbid Usury to all Church-men, as if this particular Exception implied the thing to be allowable in all other Christians, who are not Churchmen. Now, to overthrow this Error, we need only consider the just Importance of those Arguments, upon which these Prohibitions to Clergy-men in particular are founded. You will find, for instance, in the Canons of **Nice*, in the Decretals of *Leo*, and other Decrees of the Church, that the passages of Scripture, upon which the forbidding of Usury to Persons in Holy Orders is grounded, are such as equally concern and oblige all Christians of what quality

* Can. 18.
Univ. Ep.
per Camp.
esp. 3.

lity foever. And the natural and necessary Consequence arising from hence is, That what the general Precepts of the Gospel had before ordained for all, the *Church* by her subsequent Orders intended to enforce, and bind yet more, upon the Clergy in particular. And the true way of arguing the like case will be, to make the same Inference from these Canons, which forbid all Ecclesiastical Persons to be present at publick Shews. This is the true state of the Question now before us, and that Canon of the Council of *Tours* Transcribed into this Paragraph, may prove a very safe and excellent Guide to our Reasonings in such matters.

We are told indeed, * that it is necessary to find out some Diversion for the Minds of Men, and some thing which may be an amusement to Courts and common People. But to this *St. Chrysostom* replies, † That there is no need of flocking to Theatres, for we may find abundance of Entertainment elsewhere. All Nature is richly furnished with delightful Spectacles, and not only so, but the exercises of Religion, and our own private Affairs, are capable of furnishing us with such Variety of Employment, in which the Mind may recreate it self, that a man need be at no trouble to seek out more: In short, that a Christian hath no such urgent Occasions

*XIV. An Answer to that Objection, taken from the necessity of Diversions. * See p. 11. † Rom. 3. 21. in Math.*

for Pleasure, as should oblige him to procure it, by such frequent Repetitions, and such solemn and industrious Pains to render it agreeable. But if our vitiated Palat can no longer take up with such Delights as are plain, and natural, and wholesome; and diseased Minds must be awakened and quickened up to Pleasure, by Motions that are extraordinary and irregular; (leaving to others the determining of particular Cases, which does not fall within the compass of my present Design) I shall make no difficulty to declare in general, that the most modest and moderate Refreshments ought to be applyed, and such Diversions as are least apt to stir our Passions, and discompose the settled sedate Temper of our Minds. And what those are, I shall not need to take the Judgment of the Fathers, since even the Philosophers themselves have left us sufficient Information. *We do not* (says *Plato*) *admit either Comedies or Tragedies into our City.* That very Art, which qualifies a Player to act so many several Parts, and put on such different Disguises, was thought by *Plato* to taint Humane Conversation with a character of Levity, unsuitable to the Dignity of a Man, and directly opposite to that Sincerity required in all our Manners and Behaviour. When he proceeded farther to consider, that the Characters

De Rep.
Lib. 2. 3.

acters represented upon the Stage, were for the most part, either mean and low, or vicious and debauched ; he saw that there was a great deal of mischief and danger in this Practice, which threatned the Players themselves ; and found cause to fear, lest they, *by degrees, should be brought to be really, and in good earnest, the very thing they used to Personate.* This Argument undermines the very Foundations of the Theatre, and does not only leave no reason for Idle Spectators, but leaves none for the very Actors, to support themselves with. The Argument of this Philosopher hath it's peculiar force upon that Observation, *that Imitation by degrees turns into Nature,* and by counterfeiting other men's Qualities and Vices, men at last come to make them their own. They degenerate into the Spirit and Temper they put on, become Slaves by affecting to appear such, and Vicious by committing Vice in *Effigie* ; but especially, when the vehemence of any Passion is to be represented, there is a necessity of forming and blowing up those Passions in their own Minds, which must be expressed and conveyed to the Audience by outward Gestures. The Spectator likewise, who is pleased with this, must partake of the same Temper ; he commends and admires the Player, because

he raised these Emotions in him ; and all this, as he goes on there, is just *the watering and cherishing those ill Weeds*, which ought by all means to have their Growth checked, and be suffered to wither away, and dye in us. Thus all the pomp and preparation of Plays tends only to make men Passionate ; to strengthen *that brutal and unreasonable part of our Souls*, which is the Spring of all our Weakness and Folly. And from hence he determined utterly to reject and exclude from His Constitution, *that voluptuous and sensual kind of Poetry ; which (he says) is so dangerous a Temptation, that this alone is capable of corrupting the most, and the best of men.*

XV. *The Tragedy of the Antients, tho more grave than that of the Moderns, condemned by the Principles of this Philosopher*

By this means he pushes his Argument on to the very first Principles, and carries it so high as to strip Plays of all that is Pleasurable and Entertaining in them ; which is, the Diversion they give by representing and exciting the Passions. The *Invectives of the Fathers* are partly levelled at the too large Freedoms, and the Indecencies, of the Theatres of the Antients, which yet were intended against all Scenical Entertainments and Representations in general. It is the greatest mistake in the world, to think that Their Tragedy was the only thing blamed ; for whatever Pieces of this kind are transmitted to us from
the

the old Pagans, (I blush to think what a Reproach this Observation is to Christians) do so very far excel ours in Gravity, and Wisdom; that the modern Theatres will not bear the same Seriousness and natural Simplicity. Our Poets do so far exceed all measures in this Point, that even the *English*, I hear, insult over some of them for their intemperate Itch of Gallantry; and making their Heroes carry their soft Passions to the utmost height, in Season and out of Season. The Antients were very far from this Indecency, and prudently confined that Passion to Comedy, which had not the Spirit and sublime Air fit for the Grandeur proper to Tragedy. And yet even This most exalted and serious part, which is truly Tragical, could not obtain the Approbation of their Philosophers. *Plato* would not endure the solemn Lamentations of the Theatre; because, as he said, *they gave too much Countenance to that weakness of Mind and querulous Temper, which utters it self in Sighs, and Tears, and doleful Complaints.* And the Argument he brings against them, is very substantial; viz. That no Misfortunes, which happen to men in this Life, are worth so deep Resentment, and so many Tears. Nor is he less displeased with the cherishing those other furious Transports of the Soul, where Indignation and

Anger

*De Rep. 3.
10.*

Anger are the governing Passions ; for these betray too violent Disorders upon too slight Provocations. So that even Tragedy it self is highly to blame, and sets the World a very ill Example, when it introduces, not only Common men, but even the bravest Heroes, disturbed with Grief or Anger, for Good or Evil Accidents, which are in truth of so mean Consideration, as all the events of this Life are, when duly weighed. For These, (as he goes on) have nothing in them, which ought tenderly to affect an Immortal Soul. Nothing is of Consequence great enough to justify that Concern, which does not extend to all the Conditions in which this Soul subsists ; that is, which does not regard it's future State. Such were the Noble Sentiments of this Great Man, who yet had never been instructed in the Promises of another Life ; and knew no more of Eternal Happiness, than what some confused Ideas and dark Conjectures led him to. And yet He thought it a disparagement to Humane Nature, that Men should be represented as *Happy*, or *Miserable*, upon the account of any present or sensible Good or Evil, which could possibly befall them here. *All this* he says, *is no better than a Corruption of our Minds.* And if *Plato* could think and argue at this rate, shall not Christians be able

De Rep.
Lib. 10.

to comprehend, how contrary to Virtue these Emotions are?

Nor does *Comedy* escape better with *Plato* than *Tragedy*. If this Philosopher accuse the Lamentations and Discontents, which *Tragedy* inspires, of so much Weakness; he is not more favourably disposed towards that blind and impetuous Inclination to Laughter and Mirth, which *Comedy* aims at raising in the Spectators. So that *Comedy* and *Tragedy* both, the Gayety of the One, and the Gravity of the other, are equally banished his Common-wealth, because both are capable of upholding and strengthening those Affections of our Soul, which are sensual and irrational.

But, beside This, there lyes Another Objection against *Comedy*, peculiar to it self; which is, that, being taken up in the Representation of Youthful Passions and Follies, it is apt to engage men in mean and vulgar Love: That is, (as he explains himself) in a fondness for People's Persons and bodily Excellencies, which he constantly sets in opposition to the Love of Truth and Virtue. In a word, No sort of Theatrical Representations would go down with this Philosopher, because there was not any of them clear of this common Vice, that it excited Love, or Anger, or some other sort of Passion, which it is the design and business of

XVI. Comical and Ridiculous Characters condemned by the same Principles.

De Rep. 10. de Legib. 7.

De Rep. 10

*XVII. Wo-
men not al-
lowed upon
the Thea-
tres of the
Ancients.*

*De Rep.
Lib. 3.*

of Virtue to master, and compose.

Farther yet. Those Dramatick Representations of the Antients, which the Vindicators of modern Plays take such pains to make us believe were far more Licentious than Ours ; and which indeed in the Comical part were Extravagant to the last Degree ; must however be acquitted of One great Indecency now in use ; which is, The admitting Female Players upon the publick Stage. The very Heathens saw the absurdity of exposing thus, and giving up to common use, a Sex, which Nature seems to have devoted to Modesty and strict Reserve ; and look'd upon this as a sort of Prostitution. And from hence also *Plato* fetched another Argument for Condemning the Theatre in general. Because Custom and the Rules then in force, not allowing Women to Play upon the Stage, there was a necessity of having their Parts acted by Men. And consequently Men were obliged, not only to appear in Female habit and form, but to counterfeit their Tears, and Shrieks ; the Impotence and Fury of their Passions, and to put on all the Weakness of their Sex. All which, in the Judgment of this Philosopher, was so much beneath their Character, so extremely Unsuitable and Absurd ; that this single Reason, had there been no other,

ther, had been sufficient to give him an irreconcilable Prejudice against Plays in general.

Now though his Scholar *Aristotle* affected to Contradict him, and His more Complying and Debonnair Philosophy thought fit to attribute to Tragedy a certain manner, (which yet he hath left us in the dark about, and would not, or knew not how to explain) of purifying and improving the Passions it excites, (at least in the case of Fear and Compassion) yet did he nevertheless discover and acknowledge something so dangerous in the Stage, that he does not find it convenient to admit Young People to see either Comedies, or so much as Tragedies ; though in that Age so very grave and serious as I have already observed. For which he assigns this excellent Reason ; *That* We ought to be very jealous and fearful of the first Impressions made upon young and tender Minds ; which the Fable and Management of Tragedies would be apt to move too strongly. Not that the Passions of young People were *then* represented so Exorbitant, as *now* men suffer and even require them to be ; it hath been already observed what Measures they were then confined to : But because (generally speaking) those artful Compositions struck the Passions

XVIII. *Aristotle's opinion in this matter*
Poet. 7.

Poet 7.17.

too sensibly. They represented Murder and Revenge, Treachery, Conspiracies, and other black and horrid Crimes, such as this Philosopher thought it safer and more adviseable for Men in heat of Youth, not so much as to hear once mentioned. So far was He from permitting such persons to see them represented with all the Life and Force, which the Stage gives; when it labours to possess the Audience by all possible Industry and Artifice, that the thing then in agitation is no longer Fiction and Fable, but the very Substance and Reality of what it so exquisitely personates.

I confess, I do not understand, why *Aristotle*, after advancing thus far, should not have extended this Pre-caution somewhat farther. Not only Youth, but even Childhood, is of very long continuance among men; or, to speak more properly, the generality of People never entirely cease to be Children. And after all, What Account can a man promise himself from those Dispositions to Fear or Compassion, which he finds the Stage inspire for the Sufferings and Disasters of Heroes, except that of making the Heart more tender, and more sensibly affected with the Objects of these Passions? But let us, if you please, leave *Aristotle* to that mysterious manner of purifying them, which neither himself, nor his

Inter-

Interpreters have been able as yet to give either any intelligible Account of, or any substantial Reasons for: Thus much at least he hath taught us most expressly, that it is a very dangerous Attempt to raise the Passions that tend to Pleasures. For indeed to this very matter we may very truly apply that Maxim of the *Philosopher*, which he hath delivered upon a different Occasion; that the *Doing of the thing follows the Discourse of it close at the heels, and a man suffers himself without any difficulty to be brought over to the practice of that which he loves, and takes delight to hear, as to talk of.* A Maxim this is of very great significance and use in matters relating to humane Conversation; and such as, once allowed, will leave no room for those agreeable and insnaring Sentiments, which are now the Ground-work, and darling Subject, of all our modern Compositions for the Stage.

Polit. 8. 4.

Plato, by a Principle still more general, was Convinced, that those Arts and Trades, which minister only to Pleasure, and have This for their Object, are all of them dangerous to Morality and Humane Life. Because they make it their business to pick it up any where from good or bad Causes; even at the expence of all that is truly Valuable. Nay, they sacrifice even Virtue and Conscience, and Decency, and every

XIX. Another principle of Plato upon this matter De Rep. Lib. 2. 3. 10. de leg. 2. 7.

every thing; so little are They given to proceed with any Distinction, whose end it is to furnish Pleasure, if the most scandalous means happen at any time to be necessary for compassing that end. And hence this Philosopher fetches a fresh Argument, for banishing utterly out of his Re-publick, not only Comick, and Tragick, but even Epick Poets too. Nor could he be prevailed upon to extend his Mercy to the Divine *Homer* himself, as he was then styled, though his Writings in those days were thought the effect of Inspiration. But all this notwithstanding, the inexorable *Plato* sent them all packing together, because, All agreeing in the same common Design of Pleasure, they do all put true or false, good or bad Instructions upon the World; and without any regard to the Simplicity and Unity of Truth, and that it ought always to be the same, they vary and shift as occasion serves; and aim at nothing but pleasing the Palates, and cherishing the Passions, of Men. Which being the most complicated and changeable things in Nature, they must shuffle and change accordingly. This he tells us is the very Reason, why *there is an old Antipathy between the Philosophers and the Poets*. The Former conforming themselves to Reason, the Latter accomodating their Studies to Plea-

Pleasure. He therefore frames such Laws, as dismiss these Latter with an appearance of Respect, and crown them with a sort of imaginary Lawrel; but at the same time with an inflexible Severity, accosting them thus; We cannot away with the Exclamations of your Theatres, nor bear that any body in our Cities should speak louder, or be more heard than ourselves. And if these Civil Institutions were so rigorous, shall the *Christian* suffer any to Drown the Voice of the Gospel among us? Shall men most zealously Applaud, and labour with all their might to Recommend to the World, Ambition, and Fame, and Revenge, and those fantastical Notions of Honour, which Jesus Christ hath banished from among Them, whom he hath commanded to renounce the World? Shall we support and cherish those Passions which he hath directed us to subdue and stifle? St. *John* calls loudly to all Believers, and all Ages and Conditions of men: *I have written unto you Fathers; I have written unto you Old Men; I have written unto you Young Men; I have written unto you Children:* That is, to all you that are Christians of what Quality soever: *Love not the World, neither the things that are in the World, For all that is in the World, is the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life.* In these words, both

*De Rep. 3:
de leg. 7:*

1 Joh. 2:12.

66 *Maxims and Reflections*

the World it self, and the Stage, which is the Image and Picture of it, are equally reprov'd. For it is the World with it's Poms, and Vanities, and wicked Charms, which our Plays represent and recommend to us. As therefore in the World, which is the Original, all things are full of Sensuality, and Curiosity, Ostentation, and Vanity and Pride ; so in the Stage, which is the Copy, these things abound and reign. And the Effect of the Theatre must needs be to make us Fond of these things, because the only End it pursues is to promote Pleasure, and render the Representation of these things Entertaining and Delightful to us.

XX. *The*
Scriptures
silent upon
this Occa-
sion. and
why.

Disc. P. 10
Fr. 3.

But after all, if Plays be so very Dangerous, we are urg'd to give an Account, how it comes to pass, that Jesus Christ and his Apostles have never given us warning of so exceeding perillous a Diversion ; nay, that they have not expressly forbidden so great an Evil. This Remark hath likewise been thought worthy a place in *the Discourse*. If you read the *Scriptures* over and over, you will never meet (says he) with any express, and particular Precept against Plays. Now the Writers that pretend to Argue at this rate, and would draw any advantageous Inferences from this Silence of Scripture, may proceed, and would do like themselves, by Parity of Reason, to justify the

the Gladiators, and all the Horror and Brutality of the Heathen Spectacles : Since the Scriptures, it must be confess'd, have no more express Precepts against These, than they have against Plays. That is, in truth, they never so much as mention Either. But the Holy Fathers, who were pressed with the like Difficulties by the Apologists for those Spectacles heretofore, have led us the way in this Argument. And from Them we may learn, that the true and solid Answer to such Objections is this ; *That* The Scriptures, which forbid and banish vicious Inclinations , as unlawful ; do by necessary Consequence, forbid all such Representations, which, by delighting the Senses, do naturally and industriously intangle and uphold men in those vicious Inclinations. Thus immodest Pictures are condemned in all those passages of Holy Writ, where all immodest and uncomely things are forbidden in general Terms. And the Case is exactly the same in the Representations upon the Stage. St. *John* hath included All, and nothing can be more full than that of his first Epistle *Love not the World, neither the things that are in the World ; if any man love the World, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the World, the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life, is*

*1 John 114
15.*

not of the Father, but is of the World. Now if this Lust be not of God, that delightful Representation, which tricks it up, and sets it off in all its alluring Charms, is not of him neither; and if This be of the World as well as the Other, then Christians are as much forbidden to love, or partake in This, as the Other.

St. Paul hath likewise comprehended all such matters in that solemn and very remarkable Precept. *Finally, Brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest; whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, (or Chast) whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any Virtue, and if there be any Praise, think on these things.* Consequently, Whatever takes our Thoughts and Affections off from these things, and inspires Thoughts and Affections of a contrary Quality, ought by no means to delight us, nay, ought by all means to be suspected and shunned by us. In this Collection of Objects for our Thoughts, which St. Paul here propounds to every Christian, let our Vindicators try, if they can find any place for our Modern Plays, how loudly and boldly soever the men of this World may boast of, or undertake to defend, then.

But

But farther yet. It is no hard matter to assign a sufficient Reason for the profound Silence of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Scriptures upon this Subject of Plays; which is, *that* there was no occasion to make any mention of them to those *Jews*, to whom they principally address'd themselves; because these sorts of Diversion had never been received, or in common practice among them. They had no Spectacles to make a part of their solemn Rejoynings. Their Festivals, their Sacrifices, and their Religious Ceremonies, supply'd this Office abundantly. They were by their primitive Institution, a plain and natural sort of Livers. They had none of the Gayeties and corrupt Inventions of *Greece*; and after that Encomium of * *Balaam* *There is no Idol* Num. 23. *in Jacob, neither is there any Divination in* 21. 22. *Israel*, a man might add, There are no Theatres, neither are there any corrupt and dangerous Representations among them. This Innocent People found Pleasure and Entertainment enough in their own Families, and with their own Children: Here they chose to recreate their Minds after the Example set them by their Ancestors, the Patriarchs, when they had laboured and fatigued themselves in cultivating their Ground, or attending their Flocks, and those other domestick Cares, which succeeded in-

to the place of these Employments. And indeed we much mistake the matter, if, as we find They had not, so we vainly suppose that any Other men have, need of so profuse Expence so much contrivance and such exquisite Vanity, to divert and refresh themselves.

Such is the Character of those *Jews*; and this in all probability was one main Reason, why the Apostles were silent in this matter. They who had all along been accustomed to that simplicity of behaviour in use among that Race, and in that Countrey, were not concerned to reprove, or take notice in their Writings of such Practices, as the Nation, with whom they conversed, and to whom they wrote, were perfectly strangers to. It was sufficient for Their purpose to lay down such general Principles of Virtue, as would be sure to create a dislike of these things, if ever they should be afterwards introduced. The Christians knew well enough, that their Religion was a Superstructure upon the *Jewish*; and that the Church ought not to admit what the Synagogue had banished before. But however that be, the *Jews* Reserve and Strictness in this matter is a great Example to Christians. And a horrible reproach it is to a Spiritual People, to indulge the sensual appetites and
affections

affections, by those Delights, which a Carnal People never knew any thing of.

There was but one Dramatick Poem ever among the *Jews*, and that is the Book of *Canticles*. But this Breathes only Heavenly and Divine Love : And yet, because this refined and exalted affection is represented in Characters of human Love, young People were forbidden to read that Book. Whereas now no scruple is made of inviting men to see Lovers sighing and dying, only for the meer pleasure of Loving, and to give the Spectators a Relish for the Amorous folly. St. * *Augustin* makes some Question, whether Musick and Singing should be allowed in Churches, and if the severe discipline of St. *Athanasius* and the Church of *Alexandria* should not rather be stuck to, which was so grave and rigorous, as scarcely to allow the gentlest turns of the Voice in Singing, or rather in repeating, the *Psalms*. So very jealous were some good men in the Church, that the sweetness of Singing might make the mind too light and airy. I do not instance in this example, with any design of censuring the contrary methods since in use ; by which, though somewhat late, grave and solemn Musick was introduced into Divine Worship, to raise the minds of men when they sink and flag ; and sensibly to express the

XXI. Reflections upon the Book of Canticles and Church-Musick.

Conf. 10. 33.

Magnificence of this Worship, when their cold and languid Devotions stand in need of these Helps. I would not therefore be thought to condemn this Practice, either by the simplicity of the Ancient, or the Gravity of the Modern, Singing. I only complain, that the Scrupulous nicety of those Holy Fathers is so far forgotten, that instead of being tender and jealous of admitting the delights of Musick to set off the *Songs of Sion*, the world takes pains to apply them to Vice and Ribaldry, and such as Profane Atheistical *Babylon* would inspire her Abominations with. The same St. *Augustine* reproves those Writers, who made an Ostentation of their Wit, in giving pretty turns to matters of no great moment; and begs them, *that they would not take pains to make that Pleasing, which is not Profitable. Ne faciant delectabilia quæ sunt inutilia.* But now men labour to make that please, which is sure to hurt them whom it pleases. And no less pernicious a Design than this hath gained the Author of the Discourse a great many Friends and Favourites in the world.

XXII. St.
Thomas
Aquinas
his Doct-
rine upon
this oc-
casion ex-
plained.
Discourse
Pag. 10.
A. C.

It is now a proper time to divest this discourse of the Authority and Warrant, which Plays are here Intituled to, from the great names of St. *Thomas*, and other Holy and Learned Casuists. As to St. *Thomas*,

Two

Two Articles are alledged out of Him, part of the Question concerning *Modesty in outward Actions and Bodily Gestures*. And nothing, we are told, can be more particular, more full to the purpose, than what he delivers there is, in vindication of Plays. Now first of all I must observe to my Reader, that the Business of Plays is not the main Subject, which he there designed to treat of, but that it comes in occasionally only. The Question propounded in that second Article, is, Whether there be such things as we call *Ludicrous* and *Diverting*, which may be allowed of in human Conversation, as well in Actions, as in Words; *dictis seu factis*. In plain Terms, Whether there be such things as Sports, and Diversions, and Innocent Recreations, which may come under the Head of Bodily Gestures. And he affirms that such there are; and that the using them well and prudently is not only allowable, but even a *Virtue*; which is not by any means the matter now in dispute. Throughout this whole Article he says not one word of Plays: But he speaks in general Terms concerning Diversions necessary for unbending and refreshing the Mind, which he reduces to that Virtue styled by *Aristotle*, *Eutrapelia*, as their proper Topick in Morality. A Term, which I shall have occasion to explain by and by.

From

2da 2da
qu. 168.
Art. 2. c.
3.

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2da 2da
qu. 168.
Art. 2. c.
3.

From

From hence he proceeds to the Third Article, and here the Point to be discussed is, *Whether men may be guilty of any vitious excess in such Merriments and Diversions*: And he shews evidently, that they may. But still not a syllable concerning Plays in the main Substance, or Body of the Article. So that thus far we are under no difficulty at all in the matter.

That then, from whence this difficulty grows, is this. *That St. Thomas* in the same Article forms to himself an Objection, (which is the Third there) to this purpose. He instances in the Trade of Mimicks, Buffoons, Stage-Players, (*Histriones*) the Histrionick Art. I term it so, because it is not certain, that our Modern Players are only, or properly, meant by it. But however that be, the force of the Objection lyes here. In this Art, whatever it be, the Professors of it are guilty of excesses in Play or Diversion, for they pass their whole time in it, and make it their Livelihood; and yet this Profession is not censured as Vitious; therefore there is no such thing as a Vitious excess in these matters. To this he replies, that the Trade indeed is not to be condemned, provided they, who exercise it, do diligently and duly observe the Rules and Measures, which he prescribes them there. Which are, that, for the sake of entertain-
ment

ment and diversion, *they neither speak nor do any thing unlawful, that they do not prejudice weightier business, nor act at unseasonable times.* And this is all the Inference, that can fairly be drawn from this eminent Casuist in favour of Plays.

But that the Conclusion from hence may be sound and good, we must in the first place be well assured, that *St. Thomas* under the Title of *Histriones* meant such Players as Ours. And this is so far from being certain, that it is absolutely false. For under this Title he manifestly comprehends a certain Player, *Joculator*, which *Paphnutius* was told by Revelation was equal to himself in Virtue. And this was evidently no such person as we commonly understand by the name of a *Player*, but an *honest Piper that got his living by his Flute in a neighbouring Village*; and thus much is plain from that passage, which *St. Thomas* cites out of the Life of *Paphnutius*. Consequently then, no advantage can be made of this in favour of Modern *Players*. But on the contrary we are to observe, that God designing to shew an eminent Saint, that he knew how to train up very obscure people to admirable Piety and Virtue, even in the meanest and most despised Employments, did not instance in *Players*, who were at that time very numerous, but he chose to make use of another

XXIII.
*The first
and second
Reflections
upon Aquinas his
Doctrine.*

Vit. Patrum Rufin. Paphr. cap. 16. hist. Laus c. 63.

another kind of Example: A poor man, who got an honest Livelihood, by playing upon an innocent sort of Musick; One who excelled in the Virtue of Humility, and esteemed himself the Chief of Sinners, because from the Conversation of Thieves and Robbers, he had betaken himself to this despicable and ignominious way of Living, *Fædum Artificium* as he terms it; not that there was any thing strictly Vicious in this Trade; but because the Pipe among the Ancients was an Instrument very much despised. To which we must add further, that he quitted this infamous profession, as soon as he was better taught by *Paphnutius*. And this is the very Point, upon which that determination, and the whole Argument turns, which our Author pretends to draw from the Doctrin of *Aquinas*, in behalf of Plays.

Secondly, When he mentions upon this occasion the Delightful Entertainment, which these *Histriones* gave to the People by their *Words and Actions*, he confines himself to the notion of Facetious Discourse, attended and set off with pleasant Gestures. Which is likewise an Idea very distant from that of Plays. There were indeed but few Entertainments of this kind, if any at all to be met with, in the Age when this Casuist lived. In his Book upon the * Sentences, he

he speaks of *Plays in Theatres, as things which had been in request formerly: Ludi qui in Theatris agebantur*. And neither in this place before us, nor in any other passage where he treats of the Diversions in use in his time, is there the least mention made of Theatres. Nor do I find them once named in St. *Bonaventure*, who was his Cotemporary. The many peremptory decrees of the Church, and the common Cry of the Fathers, who had inveighed so sharply against them, had brought them into general disrepute, and probably into a total disuse, before that time. They did indeed get up again some time after, but then they appeared in a form very different, from that which we are at present treating of them under. But in regard we see, that St. *Thomas* takes no notice of them; We have reason to believe, that they did not prevail to any great degree in his time. For then we meet with little else, but ridiculous relations of some pious Stories; or the Legerdmain of *Jugglers, Joculatores*; who amused the common people with their Tricks and little Tales. And whom St. *Lewis* is said at last to have put down quite; finding the difficulty, that there always is, to contain such sort of Fellows within the Bounds of Decency.

But be that as it will, yet I observe in the *Third* place, that St. *Thomas* cannot in any reason be supposed to approve of Buffoonery

In 4. Dis.
16. qu. 4.
art. 2. c.

XXIV.
The Third
Reflection
and a Passage
of St.
Thomas a-
gainst Buff-
oonery.

fooonery in the mouths of Christians ; Since among the several Conditions and Limitations, which he makes Diversions subject to, he requires among the rest, *that the Grave and Serious Temper of the mind be not wholly broken and dissolved, ne Gravitās animae totaliter resolvatur.* From whence it is plain, that He who pretends to bring in this Casuist for an Advocate on his side, ought first to prove, that this Condition, so peremptorily required by him, is agreeable to the Extravagances of our modern Theatres ; and to shew us some remains at least of Gravity preserved in the midst of those excessive Buffooneries now in use among us. But *Aquinas* is very far from any such absurd Doctrin as he is produced for. For, quite contrary, in his Commentary upon those words of St. Paul to the * *Ephesians*, *Neither Filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient.* (*Scurrility*) he explains these three words after the following manner. *The Apostle*, (says he) does here exclude Three Vices from a Christian's Conversation ; *Filthiness*, which consists in unclean touches, unlawful Embraces, and lascivious Kisses. *Foolish Talking*, that is, Words that Provoke to Sin ; and *Inconvenient Jestings* ; Ribaldry, and Terms of Merri-ment, by which men make it their business to set people a Laughing. And against these,

Ephes. 5.
4.

Com. in
Ep. ad Eph.
cap. 3. vers.
2.

these, he alledges that solemn warning of our Saviour Christ in St. *Mathew*, That *men shall give an account for every idle word in the day of Judgment*, and these Idle words, he tells us, are such, as propose no good to themselves, nor are spoken for any other end, but only to jest for the diversion of other people. *Verbum Jocularium per quod volunt inde placere alijs.*

'Tis manifest therefore, that he ranks these three things under the head of Vices: and acknowledges a particular malignity in those words, *which have regard only to the mirth of others, and the making them laugh*, distinct from that, which attends such words, as provoke men to Sin. And this plainly banishes Buffoonery, or to speak more positively, Ridiculing, and Jestings from among Christians: as an Action light, indecent, and, in his opinion, within the compass of *those Idle words* mentioned by Christ; Not only unprofitable, nay sometimes very mischievous, but unsuitable to the Gravity required in the Temper and Carriage of Christians.

In the *Fourth* place, Admitting it were true, which yet it is not, that the Passage produced out of *Aquinas* his *Summe* were intended of Plays; or that these were, or were not, in use and request at the time when he lived; yet even thus it is manifest, that

XXV. The
Fourth
Fifth and
Sixth Re-
flection St.
Thomas re-
conciled
with him-
self.

2.2. Qu.

168. Art.

2. c.

that the Diversion he approves of, must have three Qualifications to bear it out. *The First and Chief is, that it do not aim at giving delight by any Actions or VVords that are indecent or hurtful. Quod delectatio non queratur in aliquibus operationibus vel verbis turpibus aut nocivis.* The Second is, that the Seriousness of the mind be not wholly relaxed and lost; while we profess to unbend it a little by Recreations. *Ne gravitas animæ totaliter resolvatur.* The Third, that it be suitable to the Person, the Time, the Place, and, in all other Circumstances, so regulated, as to be free from Indecency. *Ut congruat personæ; et tempori, et loco; et secundum alias Circumstantias debite ordinetur.* Now to give any force to the Argument taken from this Authority, and to do right to the first of these Conditions, our Author will be obliged in the first place, to demonstrate, that there is no hurt in exciting the most dangerous Passions; which is manifestly absurd; Or else, that such Passions are not excited by those delightful Representations, which Plays give us of them; which is manifestly repugnant both to common Experience and to the very End and Design of those Representations, as I have already shewed at large: or lastly, that this famous Casuist was yet so weak a man, and so unskilled in humane Nature, as not to be sensible, that there

there is nothing which conveys a quicker Infection, and blows up those Passions more violently, than passionate Discourses, particularly soft and tender things, and long Dialogues and Descriptions of Love. And this would be the very extremity of all absurdity, and such as, would the thing admit of the least doubt, were most easily confuted, from the words of this very Casuist himself. Thus much, I think, is sufficient with regard to the First Qualification. The Second hath been already spoken to, for that is plainly violated by Buffoonery, and Scurrility, and Farce. And the Third will come under our Consideration, when we speak to the Circumstances of Time and Seasons, particularly with relation to *Holidays* and *Lent*.

Upon these things thus premised, I proceed to make a Fifth Reflection upon those words of St. Thomas in the Third Objection of the third Article. If these *Histriones* (says he) *carried their Diversions up to excess, they then would all live in a state of Sin; and not They only, but all such as make use of them, and encourage their Sin, and give them Pay and Profit for it, would likewise be guilty of sin. Si qui autem sustentant illos Histriones qui illicitis ludis utuntur, peccant; quasi eos in peccato foventes.* St. Thomas lays down these Propositions, which in are truth not to be con-

G

tested,

tested, and he does not excuse these *Histriones*, what sort of People soever that Name may belong to, any farther than by supposing, and allowing, that their Action have nothing in it that is Evil or Criminal, either in it self, *secundum se*, or in its Excess beyond the Rules of Modesty. But be this Profession what it will, yet though never so innocent in it self, if Experience plainly demonstrate, that, as now exercised among us, it be attended with very dangerous and hurtful Circumstances : In such a Case this very Divine hath left us a Rule to guide our Judgments by ; which is, that even the Spectators, (what vain boasts soever they may make of not feeling their Passions kindled, and perhaps indeed they may not be so far inflamed as to be sensible of it themselves) do yet partake in the Guilt of all the Wickedness and Destruction wrought there ; since it is manifest they contribute to these People's Profit, and encourage and Support them in their sinful and mischievous Practices.

Sixthly and Lastly. Allowing that St. Thomas, when speaking of this Art of Players, or Mimicks, (or whatsoever you will call the *Histriones*) speculatively considered, and in general, do reckon it among the allowable and Innocent Professions ; yet in another place, where he regards the ordinary

ry Use of it, and speaks of it, Practically considered, he ranks it with the infamous ways of Living, and accounts the Gains arising from it, to be scandalous and unlawful. *For such, says he, is the Profit brought in by persons Prostituting their Bodies, and the Histrionick Trade, and some others of the like sort. Quadam dicuntur male acquisita, quia acquiruntur ex turpi causa, sive de meretricio, et Histrionatu, et alijs hujusmodi.* He does not here interpose any limitation to moderate the severity of his Expression, or abate of the Horrour and Odium which we draw upon this Scandalous Trade. You see what Company he places it in, and to what filthy abominable Practices he compares it here, notwithstanding any favour or excuse for it, which he is pretended to have exprest for it elsewhere. The only way to reconcile which Passages, and make this great Divine consistent with himself, is this. To conclude, that when he excuses or (if they will have it so) approves this profession, and the Encouragement of those that exercise it, by frequenting those Diversions, and paying them for their pains; he looks upon this Art in its most generall, abstracted, and metaphysical sense; what it is in its own self, stripped of all those Circumstances, that may vitiate and alter the nature of it; But when he considers it

22. qu. 87.

Art. 2. ad 6

2.

as it really is in common use, and attended with all those Circumstances in which we see it upon the Stage; then there is no censure, no infamous terms, that he thinks too bad for it.

And thus you see at last what a zealous and mighty Patronizer of Plays St. *Thomas* is. The two Passages in his *Somme*, which those who vindicate Plays thought themselves so strongly entrenched in, are beaten down about their own Ears; since *First*, it hath not been clearly made out, that he speaks of *Plays* and *Players* (as we now take the Terms) in that Passage; nay, *Secondly*, sufficient Testimony hath been produced that he never intended such sort of People there: and *Thirdly*, it is even demonstrated, that whatever allowance he might be content to give to Plays (*in themselves*) considered by way of Speculation, in their general and abstracted sense, such as it is barely possible they *may be*, yet our Plays in particular, considered Practically, and as they *Really are*, he does not only utterly exclude, according to his Principles laid down in that very Passage; but in another part of his Book expresses the greatest detestation, and passes a peremptory sentence against them. And now after this let Ignorant and Superficial Writers oppose, if they think fit, St. *Thomas* his Authority against

against us, and bring him upon their Stage as a favourer and Champion of Plays.

Next after St. Thomas, the Other great Champion produced in their defence, is St. Antoninus, Arch-bishop of Florence. But the worst of it is, that they begin this Argument with a false Citation, and make him speak these words in his Second part. *Comedy is a mixture of pleasant Speeches and Actions, for the Diversion of a man's self, or for that of another.* Now, in this Quotation, there is a small liberty taken of accomodating the Testimony of this Great Man to their present Occasion. The Reader will judge of the Ingenuity of it, when I have told him, that this Author hath only added the Word *Comedy*, of which there is no footstep in the Text. St. Antonin, in the place referred to, speaks in general of *Diverting Words and Actions*, such as are used for Mirth and Refreshment. These are the things he treats of, which by no means include any Idea of Plays, but only That of pleasant Conversation, or however, of Innocent Sports, such as he instances in particularly, as *Tops for Children, playing at Ball and Quoits, ana Racing for Young People; and Chess for Grown Men*; and so of the Rest, without one single word of *Comedy*.

XXVI. St. Antonin's opinion examined.

* Fr. 23. Disc. p. 16. 17. St. Anton. 2. p. tit. 1. cap. 23. 1.

It is confessed, in this place of his Second Part, after a long Discourse, in which he severely condemns playing at Dice, He descends to other matters, and instances in several Professions, and at last in that of the *Historiones* : which he approves in the same sense, and with the same limitations that St. Thomas had done ; whose Authority he alleges without declaring himself more particularly in the case : So that there is no other Reply needful to this Testimony, than only that, which hath been made to that of St. Thomas already.

3.^a. tit. 8.
cap. 4. S.
12.

In his Third Part indeed, he speaks expressly of the Representations in Vogue in his time. *Representationes quæ fiunt hodie*. Which addition is a sufficient hint, that they were of no long standing then ; and yet This was about a Hundred and Fifty Years after *Aquinas*. These he declares unlawful and forbidden in some Cases, and under certain Circumstances taken notice of there ; One of which is, *If they represent things immoral and indecent, Turpia*. And all that certainly ought to fall under this condemnation, which flatters and promotes Carnal Concupiscence. And if St. Antoninus did not provide against the condition of our modern Plays, nor the Sentiments of that Impious Love, which is the constant Ground-work of such Entertainments ;

tainments; the Reason undoubtedly is, that he had his Eye upon the Representations then in use; which, as the Compositions of that Age still remaining do evidently demonstrate, were of a nature very different from Ours. The Spirit and Judgment of this Great man, with regard to these dangerous Tendernesses of the present Stage is however Sufficiently discovered, by his reducing Musick to the *Singing forth the Praises of God, Singing the Stories of Knights Errant, and other inoffensive things in due time and place.* So Holy a Person would never have called our Amorous Songs inoffensive, since his niceness ran so high, as to forbid men the Liberty of *bearing Women Sing*; because it is a freedom of *dangerous Consequence*, and as he terms it, an *Incentive to Lasciviousness. Incitativum ad lasciviam.*

By this it is easy to know, what Judgment he would have passed upon our *Opera*, and whether he would have thought it less hazardous to see our Women Play their Love parts with so much moving Art and Passion, and all the Advantages of Temptation, which their Sex can possibly furnish them with. And, if to these declarations of *Antoninus* his opinion, we add those Conditions, which he requires in all sorts of Diversions such as that *they be utterly laid* *Ibid, et 2.*
aside in Lent and other Penitential Seasons, *P. tit. 1.*
cap. 23. s.

and that they do not occasion the Worship of God to be neglected; and (which is more strict, and considerable still) that the Returns of them be so seldom, as, in the affairs of human Life and Conversation, to bear proportion to the quantity of Salt which men use in their Ordinary Food ; I think upon these Terms the Discourser will not only find no support from hence to the Argument he maintains, but will be expressly condemned in every branch of it, even by the Judgment of this pretended Friend to his Cause.

XXVII.
The Au-
thor's en-
couraging
the Profa-
nation of
Feasts and
Fasts, cen-
sured.

Disc. Pag.
25.

p. 54. of
the French,
left out in
the English
Translation.

I will here observe Two very considera-
ble Points, in which this Discourse commits
an open outrage upon the Holy usages of
the Church. The first is that Passage,
where the Author declares himself very
well pleased, that Plays should divide God's
own day with him ; and, though Sunday
be set apart for Religious Duties, yet Plays
may come in for a share too, provided they
content themselves with that Modesty of
not beginning till Divine Service is over and
Sermon ended, when the Church Doors are shut,
and People have had time enough for Devotion.
The other is that, wherein he gives up the
Season of Lent to this sort of Divertisement ;
and that too, notwithstanding it be, (as he
expresses himself farther) a Time consecrated
to Repentance and Humiliation for Sin ;

Time

Time of Tears and bitter Sorrow to Serious and devout Christians; a Time, in which (as the Scripture observes,) Musick should be a Torment, and Sights and Plays may seem improper, and perhaps some may think it were more convenient to have them then absolutely forbidden. And yet, in despite of all these Reasons, which he seems to have produced for no other end, than only to let the World see, how little scruple he would make of setting them aside; in defiance of that Text of Scripture urged in confirmation of them; he stands up in vindication of that horrible abuse, of acting Plays, even in this Season of Mortification and Devotion.

Prov. 25.
20.
Ecclef. 22.
6.

Now this is in effect to confound and utterly overthrow all those Ideas of Fasting, which Scripture and Tradition both have given us in this matter. The Days set apart for this purpose are so properly and naturally Times of Sorrow and Affliction, that the Scripture frequently makes Use of no other Term to express and explain them by: *You shall afflict your Souls*, that is, ye shall keep a *Fast*. And indeed the withdrawing and abstaining from the ordinary supports and refreshments of nature is designed for that very purpose, that this painful denyall of our selves may dispose us the better for a sorrowfull temper of mind. While men were eager and allowed themselves

XXVIII.
The Doctrine of the Scripture and the Church concerning Fasting.

Levit. 16.
29. Eccl. 23.
29. Numb.
29. 7. 30.
14.

in

a free use of Necessaries, they were not mighty cautious of sliding into Superfluities; but upon pretence of Necessity fell in to Excess. And therefore it was thought fit in the chastising and humbling of our selves to take the Contrary method: To cut off first the common Supplies, and not only so; but to this abstinence to joyn every thing that could be mortifying and afflicting, Sackcloth upon the Body, Ashes upon the Head, Tears and Groans and Lamentations. And all this, because This was a *Day of Atonement*, a Time to propitiate and seek pardon for their Sins; and therefore they were to feel, and to bear all the marks of deep sorrow and affliction, and to find no rest, no Comfort to their Souls.

Isa. LVIII.

Fasting hath yet one Character more, peculiar to it under the New Testament, as it is an Expression of that Grief the Church lyes under, during the time of her Spouse's absence. And this agrees with that saying of Christ himself: *Can the Children of the Bridchamber mourn, as long as the Bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the Bridegroom shall be taken from them; and then shall they fast.* Here you see mourning and Fasting put together again, and both the One and the Other are, in our Saviours judgment, the distinguishing marks of that time, when the Church laments
the

Matth.

IX. 15.

the Death and absence of Jesus Christ. The Holy Fathers in like manner tell us, that upon this very account, the most Solemn Fast of all, which is the season of Lent, is celebrated upon the Approach of, and as a proper Preparation for, that of our Lord's Passion. During this time so devoted to Repentance, and Mortification, and the Remembrance of our blessed Redeemer's Death, all publick Rejoycings and Diversions are forbidden. In this whole Intervall of Sorrow the Canons of the Church order men to abstain from the celebration of Marriage; And they, who are at all versed in the Discipline and usages of the Church, cannot but understand the Reasons for it. It cannot then seem strange, that Shews, and publick Entertainments, have been in a particular manner forbidden during this Season. For, allowing them to be altogether innocent, yet it is obvious they are indecent; as a testimony of Gayety and Joy, which is by no means Suitable to the then Sorrowful State of the Church in general. But if even Innocent Diversions are not then allowed, much less are the Infamous and the Profane. The Church forbears even Holy Rejoycings, and the very Festivals of the Saints were not suffered to be kept, because these could not be solemnized without some Demonstration of publick Joy. This Tem-

*Conc.**Laod. can**52.**Can. 51.*

per

per and Spirit is still preserved in the Church, as They, who are learned in the Rites of it, know and teach. It is upon the same Principle, that no Fasts were kept on Sundays, nor between Easter and Whitsuntide; because these are times set apart for Holy Rejoycing; when we sing Hallelujah's and Hymns of Praise, the Figure of that Song of the Lamb, and never ceasing Joy, in the next world. Now, if Fasting be inconsistent with a season dedicated to Holy Joy, ought common Mirth and profane Revellings to be mingled with it? ought even those publick Diversions which at other times are not allowable? Is this a time to hear the jests of Buffoons, whose whole discourse utterly stifles the Spirit of Compunction? Are Plays then proper, which, taken in the most favourable Character their Champions contend for, will at least fill your heads with vain and idle thoughts, with sensitive and worldly, admitting them to be innocent and otherwise unblameable, Pleasures?

XXIX.
A fresh abuse of St.
Thomas
Aquinas, his
Doctrine.

* Ecclesi.
22. 6.

In despite of these Holy Traditions, and in direct contradiction to that passage of the Wise * Man produced by our Author, against the use of Musick in time of Mourning, he still persists in allowing Plays to be acted the whole Season of *Lent* throughout. He would not indeed deprive from us the meer favour of giving him the Hearing up-

on

on this Occasion, were it not for the Respect due to a greater Authority than his own, which he hath the hardiness once more to summon in, as a Voucher for his Errors. For, after propounding all the Objections he knew against Acting Plays in Lent, he adds, *To all this I answer in St. Thomas his own words*; and then he cites an Article of this Holy Doctor upon the Sentences, which is the very same, that we had occasion to produce and examine already upon another occasion.

*Fr. p. 54.
In 4. Dist.
16. qu. 4.
art. 2. cap.
see N. 23.
p. 75. a-
bove.*

Now first of all, it is most certain, that the Casuist hath nothing to do with Lent in that place, nor does he say one single Syllable concerning it. But though a man would, (as I cannot but acknowledge he might reasonably enough) apply in some degree to the season of Lent, the Rules and Measures, which this great Oracle lays down with regard to the State of Penitents in general; yet even thus there is not any thing there, which will not make against the Pretension of our Author.

St. Thomas does in that place take Three Questions into Consideration, the Two former whereof relate to Sports or Diversions; In the First he speaks of these in General; In the Second he descends to Shews in Particular. While he is treating of Diversions in general, and before he comes

to instance in or consider Shews or publick Sights, he forbids Penitents the indulging, though never so privately, such Diversions, as are apt to rejoyce and very agreeably entertain the mind; Which Prohibition he grounds upon this, *that a State of Penitence requires Tears and not Mirth*, and therefore the utmost he allows them is, *with great moderation to use some certain Recreations, so far as may refresh themselves, and keep up good Society with the Persons they dwell and converse among.* And all this, it is plain, is nothing to the point before us, for such Permissions will not reach very many Cases. But now, under the Second Question, where he comes to consider *Shews* in particular, there he positively determines the Point against Penitents, and declares such are bound to avoid them, *Speſtacula vitanda Penitenti.* Nay that they are bound, not only to decline such as are evil in their own Nature, from which, says he, *these Persons lye under a stronger obligation to abstain, than common men*; but, even from such Diversions as are useful and necessary to Mankind, among which he instances particularly in *Hunting.*

*Ad. 2.
qu. cad.*

How Strict the Discipline of the Antient Church was upon this Occasion, as it is pretty well known, so it deserves to be constantly remembred. By This, all sorts of Exercises were interdicted to Penitents, which

which unsettle the mind, and dispose to Levity. And this Rule was so well fixed, that you see there was no Relaxation of it, granted by *St. Thomas*, who lived in the Thirteenth Century. We find among the Sermons printed in *St. Ambrose*, one of *St. Casarius Archbishop* of *Arles*, where he tells us three or four times over; That, whoever hunts any part of Lent, (*horum quadraginta dierum curriculo*) does not really fast; no (says he) not though he abstain from food longer than Ordinary and do not eat till the Evening, (which was the constant usage of that Age) It is true, he does not refresh himself at common hours, but, notwithstanding that, he hath not fasted unto the Lord, for Fasting impliyes a great deal more then eating later than is usuall- *Potes videri tardius te refecisse, nontamen Domino jejunasse.*

Serm. 39

This Author lived about the End of the sixth Century. In the ninth Age, *Pope Nicolas*, imposes the same Observance upon the *Bulgarians*, who consulted him for direction, and grounds it upon the Tradition of the former Ages of the Church. This severity was derived from the primitive Discipline in the case of *Penitents*; And what was then thought expedient for particular Persons and Cases, was afterwards judged a proper Course for the observance of Lent; This being a Season, when the whole Church

Ad const.
Bulg. cap.
44

Church, and every member of it, put themselves into the condition of Penitents. And, lest any should imagine, that this discipline of Penitents was unreasonable and beyond all measure Rigorous, *St. Thomas* justifies it with this Argument, that such Publick Shews and Exercises, take off from
Ibid. ad .2. the Seriousness of the mind, and are a great Hindrance to Recollection; That the State of Penitents is a State of uneasiness and Trouble and therefore the Church hath a right, and does well in such Circumstances to use her right, of debarring such from the use and enjoyment of such things, which though usefull in their own Nature, are yet by no means proper for these persons present Condition. And, that nothing less than a case of Necessity, is a good Exception to this Rule, *ubi Necessitas exposcit*; as for instance, If a man had no other way of getting his Living but by Hunting. All which is agreeable to the Canons, to the Doctrine of the Saints, and to the Master of the Sentences. And, having by all these Authorities Moderated the Diversions, which a private Penitent may allow himself in, for the refreshment of his own mind, and the keeping up a good Correspondence with his Neighbours and acquaintance; he forbids such, the Use of all Publick Shews, and all those exercises, which discompose the mind, and render it
 unfit

*M. g. 4.
dist. 16.*

unfit for Serious Thought. Notwithstanding all which, the *Discourser*, in the Passage now before us, hath declared it allowable to see and hear Plays, *all Lent long*, (for these are his very words) He discovers in this no manner of Inconsistence with that Spirit of mortification and deep Sorrow, which the Church at that time makes publick Profession of; and he hath the confidence to call this Answering all Objections to the Contrary, in *Th. Aquinas* his own Words.

Fr. p. 541

The same Author declares himself yet farther upon this subject, in that Question already quoted out of his *Summes* where in the Fourth Article, he inquires, *Whether there can be any Sin in the Defect, or too rigid Forbearance of Diversion.* That is, In refusing and denying a mans self every thing, that may contribute to the recreating his Mind. For That is the meaning of *Ludus* or *Play* mentioned there. And the first Objection he raises is this, that *in all appearance, there can be no Sin in the defect of these Diversions, because no Sin is prescribed to Penitents, and yet all Diversions are prohibited so such.* For This agrees with a Passage in a Book attributed to *St. Augustin*, where he says, *that if a Penitent desire to obtain the grace of a full and perfect Pardon, it is necessary for him to forbear Diversions, and*

2. 2. q. 11.
168. A. 1. 4.lib. 2.
cap. 12.
p. 124.

Humiliation for his Sins. This Passage was in the
 Lib. 4. Text of the Master of the Sentences, and the Doc-
 diss. 16. trine contained in it received as uncontestable,
 because agreeing exactly with all the ancient Can-
 ons. *St. Thomas* likewise replies, that *Lamentation*
and Grief for Sin are commanded the Penitents, and
therefore Diversion is not allowed to such; because
Reason requires the abatement of such things to persons
under Circumstances of Sorrow. Penitentibus lusus
indicitur pro peccatis, ideo interdicitur eis ludus. Nec
hoc pertinet ad vitium defectus quia hoc ipsum est
secundum rationem, quod in eis ludus diminuitur.
 This is the only Restriction produced there,
 which yet does not in any degree affect the pub-
 lick Diversions because it does not take off the
 Prohibition of Shews: but it leaves that in full
 force, as we find it expressly laid in all those
 Canons that concern a Penitentiall State.
 And this the same Author himself acknowledges,
 in the passage lately cited out of his Book upon
 the Sentences.

Let not men therefore injure the Doctrine,
 and misrepresent the Judgment, of so Pious and
 Great a man, by pretending his Authority for
 so manifest a Relaxation of Ecclesiasticall Dis-
 cipline. It is enough, and too much, to intro-
 duce him as a Vindicator of Plays, which yet he
 never intended. But, it is too great, too shame-
 less an abuse, to make him justify acting in
 Lent, though he have not in the whole Com-
 pass of his Works, one single Passage, which,
 either directly, or by remote Consequence
 can bear this Construction. Nay, when on the
 Contrary, he hath so expressly declared, that
 the Publick Shews are so perfectly inconsistent
 with that Spirit of Mortification and Repen-
 tanc

tance, which the Church, at the season of Lent particularly, labours so earnestly to revive and cherish in the mind of every Christian.

As to the Lord's Day, and the Observation of it, our Author begins with this remark, * *That the Holy-days are given us, not only to sanctify them, and that we may have then more leisure then at other times we have, for attending the service of God; but also, that we may rest after the Example of God himself.* And from hence he infers, that *since Pleasure is the proper Rest of Man,* according to *St. Thomas*, He may even upon Sundays allow himself the Pleasure of Plays, provided this be not done, till the publick Offices of the Day be over. And here again he endeavours to draw *St. Thomas* over to his party. Who yet *first* of all, says not one word of what he makes him say; and *Secondly* though he had said what he is produced for, yet no Conclusion can be drawn from thence, in favour of Plays, which are the subject of the present Discourse.

I should be much to blame, to spend time in a formall Confutation of One, who does not understand what he reads. But yet his Profanations of Scripture, and the Rest of Almighty God, are the less to be endured, because of their direct tendency to overthrow the Command of keeping *Holy* the Sabbath-day. Now it is true, that in *Exodus* we find that Command delivered and enforced after the following manner. *Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest, that thine Oxe and thine Ass, and all whom those Beasts represent, all whose life is imployed continually in Labour, may rest, and the Son of thy handmaid, and the stranger may be refreshed.* Now upon this occasion we may justly make *St. Pauls* Re-

XXX
The Profan-
ation of
the Lord's
Day. The
command
of keeping
Festivals
holy ex-
plained.

* Fr. p.
55. left
out in the
English.

Exod.
xx. 9.

1. Cor. IX.
9.

fection, *Doth God take care for Oxen?* No! Without all controversy his concern that They might rest was not so great, as to produce an exprefs Command for that purpose. But that Fatherly Care and Compassion, which, as *David* observes, hath a tender regard to the safety, both of *Man and Beast*, provided for the Refreshment even of Brutes themselves, that men might learn, by this Example, not to harass and oppress those that are like themselves, with never ceasing Drudgery and Toil. Or else the Reason of that Command may be, to show that the Goodness of God extends to the Preservation of our Bodies, and would have some convenient Intermision for their Comfort, from that labour and fatigue, which is common to us with Creatures of an inferiour Degree. So that this Rest of Mankind is a Second and less principall motive for the Institution of the Sabbath. But to infer from thence, that Sports, nay even that publick Sports were allowed to that ancient and peculiar people of God, betrays so gross Ignorance of their Constitution and Customes, as deserves no other answer than Disdain, and Contempt of the wretched consequences deduced from this Law. The Rest of the Jewish nation consisted in an Intermision of Bodily Labour, by which they might have leisure to employ their thoughts in meditations upon God, and his Law, and to dedicate that time to his more immediate Service. But to seek their own Pleasure, and especially so unthinking a Pleasure as that of Plays, (supposing that Age to have been addicted to such sort of Diversions) had doubtless been a manifest Profanation and crying Abuse of that Holy Day. *Isaiah* is ex-

press in this matter. For there God rebukes the *Jews* severely and upbraids them over and over for *doing their own will, and seeking their own Pleasure*, upon the day he had Sanctified, and Set apart to his own use: For looking upon the sabbath as a Day of Delight, or as a Day of Ostentation and Vainglory! He shews them what Sort of Pleasure it was intended they should pursue upon this Day, *Thou shalt delight thy self in the Lord*, says he. Some luterpreters indeed put another sense upon these Passages, but it is such as comes all to one at the last, since all agree, that the proper Delight and Pleasure of the Sabbath, is to take pleasure in God, and Good things. And yet now men go so far, as to propose the pleasure of Plays, which is a Delight so immediately and entirely sensuall, for an Imitation of God's Spiritual and Divine Rest, and a part of that Refreshment which He hath directed and ordained for Mankind. But let us leave these Reasonings to their Author, which indeed are so extravagant and odd, that it is hard to say, whether they be more despicable for the Weakness, or detestable for the Profaneness of them. He that shall undertake to defend acting Plays upon Sundays, either upon the Principles of this Discourse, or upon any Others of his own, would do well in the *first* place, to make out the Priviledge This Trade can pretend to above all the rest: that This Should lay claim to the Day which is God's Peculiar, and presume to appropriate any part of it to It self. Is the Profession of a Player more Liberal, more to be respected and encouraged, than that of Painting and Sculpture, not to mention any of those Arts which are usefull for the

Isai. 58.
13. 14.

necessary supplies of humane Life? Do not Players subsist upon this Odious Art? And can we with any colour of reason excuse those, who oblige them to the exercise of their usual Labours, by paying them for working upon a day, when others are forbidden to exercise more honest Callings? This certainly is carrying Licentiousness to much too high a Pitch. The Commands of God, and That in particular which regards the Sanctification of Holy Days, will be too much disrespected and forgotten; and upon these Terms God's own Day will in a little time be less His, than any of the other Six. Such wicked and forced Expositions do men study to find out, to abandon this day to Vanity, and Pleasure.

Dise.

XXV. Fr:

53. 56.

After this I should scarce think that frivolous Excuse for Plays upon Festivalls and Holydays worth an Answer; which grounds it self upon a Pretence, that the Theatres are not opened, till the Publick Worship is ended, and the Church doors are shut. For why should not all other Labours and Trades be indulged by the same reason, most of which without dispute are much more profitable and necessary, and have a better Title to be allowed? Who is it I beseech you, that first reserved this day, and cut it off from common use; and why should not He have the whole, as well as any part of it? What reason can be alledged why all the four and twenty hours [of this Day should not be His, as entirely as those of all the rest of the Days are Ours? I own there are some Diversions, which the Church it self does not absolutely prohibit out of the time of Divine service; but

but Plays were never any of that Number. The Discipline of the Church hath ever been uniform and consistent with it self in this point. And the Council of *Reims*, toward the Close of the last Age, in the Title of *Feastdays*, after having in the Third Chapter instanced in some Sports, which ought not to be permitted, or at least not till Service was over; does afterwards in the Sixth Chapter, put in a rank by themselves, the Diversions of the Theatres as *things that cast a blemish upon Morality and Decency, and the Holiness of the Church*, and therefore absolutely forbidden upon Holydays. *St. Charles* had made the same declaration against them: and all the Ancient and Modern Canons speak the same Language, without any Limitation or Reserve in their Favour. *St. Thomas*, whom they so confidently and groundlessly top upon us at every turn, for a Warranter of Licentiousness, does, among other necessary conditions for, even Innocent, Diversions, require this as an indispensable one, that *they be indulged only at convenient seasons*. And What is the meaning of this Precaution, but to inform us, that there are some among them, which, however allowable they be at other times, yet ought not by any means to be suffered upon Holy Days; But indeed it is not reasonable to require from us particular passages out of This, or any other Divines, condemning this abominable Division men are now content to make of times set apart for Religion, between That and the world, (not to say the Devil) They were not concerned to reprove an Abuse as yet unheard of, when They lived and wrote. They could

2. 2. qn.
168. art 2.

not foresee a Profanation of the Lord's Day, which our Immediate Ancestors saw the first breaking out of. To what purpose is it then to alledge a vicious Practice, against which all the Canons cry out so loudly: and to urge Corruption in bar to Law? We must not imagine all to be Lawfull, which, through the wickedness of the times, and the hardness of our hearts, we are under an unhappy necessity of tolerating: Or that every thing which the Civil Government cannot effectually redress or punish, will escape the Judgment of God, as easily as it does that of Man. And after all, What does it signify to the Players or to the Spectators, that these Entertainments do not interrupt the Publick Worship, but leave the Time appointed for that, entirely free to be better employed? Do these men attend upon that Worship ever the more for not being just then in the Play house? Do the generality of those persons that frequent the Playhouse ever trouble themselves with considering whether there be any Publick Worship or not? Do They understand the nature of it duly, who zealously attend upon the Sermon and Parochiall Service, and immediately upon hearing these, go streight to the Play, and there, in a Loose of worldly Delight, lose all that Spirit of Seriousness, and Recollection, and Contrition for their Sins, which the Word of God, and his Praises had excited in their hearts? So that, upon the whole matter, we must of necessity confess, that Plays are by no means made or fitted to the temper of those persons, who know how to celebrate Festivals with a true becoming frame

of mind; Those that are Christians in Disposition and in very Deed, and attend the Offices of the Church, with that Gravity and considerate Attention, which these Duties suppose and require.

After having cleared St. Thomas from those Aspersions cast upon his Doctrin, which charge it with all those Vicious and Extravagant Practices already mentioned; I think my self obliged, with all the Respect due to so great a Man, to confess ingenuously, that he seems to have swerved a little, if not from the Judgment and real Opinion, yet at least from the manner, in which the Antient Fathers used to express themselves, upon this Subject of Diversions. And the entring into This disquisition will be of some service to us, because it will furnish us with Rules and Principles, whereby to pass a right Judgment upon Comical Compositions, and, in general, of all sorts of Conversation and Discourse, which provoke Laughter. Now in the *First* place I must be bold to affirm, that I do not know any one of the Antients, but who is so far from esteeming Drollery in Conversation an Excellence, or ranging it under any *species* of Virtue, as even to look upon it as a *species* of Vice rather, though not in all cases actually and directly Sinful, nor such a Crime as renders the person using it liable to Damnation. The least accusation they bring against it, is it's Unprofitableness; which in Their opinion lays it within the compass of those *Idle words*, which, our Blessed Saviour hath declared, must be *accounted for in the day of Judgment*. Now how severe soever the Doctors

XXXI.
Reflections
upon the
Virtue
called by
Aristotle
and Th.
Aquinas
Eutrapelia.

Math. 12.
36.

and

and Casuists may appear, yet all their Censures fall short of Christ's, who hath made, not only *Evil*, but even *Useless* and *Idle* words, subject to so rigorous a Scrutiny in the great Day of Account. And therefore we cannot wonder much, if the Fathers, who understood that Text in so strict a sense, agree unanimously in their condemnation of this sort of Conversation. As for that Virtue termed *Eutrapelia*, which St. Thomas took his notion of from *Aristotle*, they must be acknowledged not to have been acquainted with it. The Translators have rendred the Greek word *εὐτραπελία*, by *Urbanity*, *Politeness*, *Good Breeding*; A man would come nearer *Aristotle's* Sense, who should term it *Raillery*, *Facetiousness*. Or, to take in the whole notion of it, an agreeable way of *Wit*, *Gayety* of *Humour*, and *spightlyness* in Conversation, attended with *Pleasant Discourse*. Which, I think, answers the Character intended for it by the Philosopher. This being the very best, that can possibly be said of such Talk as makes the Company laugh. And to this purpose he explains himself, when treating of that Virtue in his *Ethicks*. But this is so nice and airy a Virtue, that the very same Term is applyed by St. Paul to a Vice, which we render *Jesting* but the *Vulgar Scurrility*; Though indeed it do not include *Abusive Language* as *Scurrility* does, but may, according to the Fathers, be rendred in a more general Term, such as *Tartness* of *Wit*, the *Art* of moving *Laughter*, or, if you please, *Buffoonery*. St. Paul calls it *εὐτραπελία*, and places it in very bad company, such as *Filthiness* and *Foolish Talking*. So

Lib. 4. 6. 8.

that,

that, in the Judgment of this Apostle, the Three blameable Qualities of Discourse are the being *Indecent* or *Filthy*, the being *Light*, *Inconsiderate*, or *Foolish*; or the being *Smart*, *ridiculing*, or *Jesting*, or (if you allow that rendring) favouring of Buffoonery; For all these words have Significations, which it is very difficult to express in strict propriety of Terms. Now I desire it may be observed, that *St. Paul* gives this sort of Talk the very best and most creditable Name, that is ever pretended to belong to it; for he might, one would have thought, have called it *βαμολοχία*, which is that Scandalous Title fixed by the *Greeks* upon the Vice in this kind on the exceeding side; and that which *Aristotle* hath distinguished the Impertinence and Ill manners of prating Buffoons by. And yet *St. Paul*, after having taken this merry and jocular way of Conversation, under the best figure it is capable of making, and given it it's most favourable Name, does not scruple to rank it among the Vices. Not that we are from hence to conclude our selves absolutely forbidden to be sometimes pleasant and diverting in Company, but because to be always upon the merry pin, and make it one's constant business and Trade, as it were, to promote Laughing, is exceeding faulty and altogether unsuitable to the Dignity of Men or Christians. *St. Thomas*, who attended but little to the propriety of the *Greek* Text, could not make this Reflection upon *St. Paul's* manner of expressing himself. But it did not escape *St. Chrysostome*, who had the skill to observe, that the word *Εντραπελος*, does properly signify a man of Art and address,

One

Hom. 17.
ad. Ephes.

One who can with great Ease turn himself into different forms and humours, (which agrees with *Aristotles* account and Etymology of the word) Only the Father and the Philosopher differ in this, that *Aristotle* takes it in a good sense, as it implyes agreeableness of Conversation, Readiness of Wit, and Gayety of Humour, and is opposed to the blunt Rudeness and Ribaldry of Fools and Clowns ; Whereas *St. Chrysostome* keeps his Eye chiefly upon that part of the Signification, which implyes the Levity and Inconstancy of the Person, the Meanness of turning Mimick, and affecting to make the Company Laugh. All which he looks upon, as Qualities much too trifling and airy for the Gravity of a Christian, who hath such important Concerns upon his hands ; and beneath whose Character it is to descend to such little and despicable Artifices and Designs.

Ephes. 5.4.

This is what he very frequently inculcates, and urges in proof of it those words of *St. Paul* immediately following, that *These things are not convenient*. For, whereas the Vulgar hath Translated it, *Scurrilitas quæ ad rem non pertinet* : So referring this last Clause to *Jesting* only : The Greek plainly intimates, that all those things mentioned before by the Apostle are not convenient. τὰ μὴ ἀνήκοντα. and thus the Vulgar likewise heretofore understood the passage, as may be gathered from *St. Ferome*, who reads it *non pertinent*. But, whatever become of these Criticisms and various Readings, *St. Chrysostome* is express and positive, that these Three sorts of Discourse, the *Filthy*, the *Foolish*, and the *Jesting* or *Ridiculing*, are not convenient for

for a Christian. And he explains that Term Convenient, by saying, *they do not belong to us, we have nothing to do with them.* That is, They do not suit our Condition, nor are of a Piece with our Christian Calling and Duty. Under these sorts of discourse thus unbecoming and unworthy of Christians, he comprehends even those, which the *Greek* and *Latin* Writers stiled *asina*, *Urbana*, by which they meant the most witty and inoffensive sort of Railery, such as spoke a man ingenious and well bred, as well as facetious and good humoured. *Of what use,* says he, *are even these Raileries? they only serve to make you laugh.* And a little after. *All these things which turn to no Profit, and such as we have nothing to do with, are no part of our Christian Profession,* (which consists of and recommends such Methods and Practices only, as are profitable and pertinent to it's main Design.) *Therefore let there be no Idle Word among you,* plainly alluding to that Sentence of our Blessed Saviour, where he forbids and threatens such Words with a severe Reckoning to be required for them. This Father proceeds to represent the mischievous Consequences of such light and frothy Wit, and at every turn puts us in mind again, that such Discourses as aim at provoking Laughter, however they may be lookt upon as marks of Parts, and Polished Conversation, are yet unworthy of a Christian; and he at once laments and professes himself amazed, that any such wretched thing as a Knack of this kind should pass upon the world for an accomplishment, and be ranked under any Head of Virtue:

*Hom. in
Eph. 17*

This.

This, it is evident, was intended for a Gird at *Aristotle*, who is the only Person, with whom This passes for a Virtue, which *St. Chrysostome* can by no means admit to be such. I have already shewed, that he took his notion and Etymology of *Eutrapelia* from *Aristotle*. Thus it is obvious to discern he treats of it, throughout that so often cited Homily; And those Readers, who are at all acquainted with the Spirit and Manner of *St. Chrysostome*, whose Discourses are full of learned and secret allusions to the Doctrin of the old Philosophers, which it is his way frequently to reprove, without any express mention of the Authors who maintained it, will make no doubt, that my present Observation is just. And thus you have *St. Chrysostome's* Opinion of that pretended Virtue stiled *Eutrapelia*, which the Primitive and Purer Christians knew little of. *Theophylact*, and *Occumenius*, do here, as is usual with them in other places; they are only an abridgment of what *St. Chrysostome* had delivered more at large; and do not go about at all to mollify the seeming austere Principles of their Master.

XXXII.
Some Passages out of
St. Ambrose and
St. Jerom
upon the
same Subject.

Nor are the *Latin* Fathers less severe upon this Occasion. *St. Thomas* quotes a passage out of *St. Ambrose*, which he finds himself hard put to it to reconcile with *Aristotle*. It is taken out of his Book of Offices, wherein that Father handles much the same Subjects, which *Cicero* had done in that Tract we have of his under the same Title. And here, after having taken notice of the Rules given by that Orator, and some other Philosophers, who were the Wise Men of this World, *Seculares Viri*, upon the matter

matter of *Jesting* and *Raillery*, *Joca*, he begins with this Remark, that he for his part bath nothing to say upon this branch of the *Precepts* and *Doftrin* of the *Moral Philosophers*, *de jocandæ disciplina*, This, says he, is a *Topick* fit for us to pass over in silence, *nobis prætereunda*; Such as *Christians* are not concerned in; because, as he goes on there, although there be some *Raileries* in *Conversation*, which are sometimes agreeable and decent, *licet interdum Joca honesta sint ac suavia*, yet are they contrary to the *Rides* and *Discipline* of the Church, *ab Ecclesiasticâ abhorrent regulâ*, For, says he, we cannot prescribe the practice of those things which the *Scriptures* have not thought fit to give any directions for. *Quæ in Scripturis sanctis non reperimus ea quemadmodum usurpare possumus?* And this is most manifest, that in those Holy Books we no where meet with any *Approbation* or *Warrant* for such sort of Talk as aims and labours to make men laugh, So far from that, that *St. Ambrose*, after having instanced in those words of our Blessed Saviour, *Wo unto you that laugh now*, expresses his *Astonishment*, that *Christians* should so industriously seek occasions, and contrive matter for *Laughter*; *et nos Ridendi materiam quarimus ut hic videntes illic fleamus?* Where we shall do well to observe, that he rather torbids seeking these occasions industriously, than suffering our selves to be diverted with them, when they offer of their own accord, and fall in without our seeking. But this distinction notwithstanding, he infers, that we ought to decline, not only studied and excessive *Raillery*, but indeed all sorts of it, *non solum profusos sed omnes etiam jocos declinandos*

declinandos arbitror. And This explains what went before, by giving us to understand, that the Decency, there mentioned and allowed, was such only, as regards the sense of the world, and the Measures of common Conversation; not that it hath any express allowance or Approbation from Scripture; or is not, if nicely considered, an Offence against the Rule of a Christian Temper and Behaviour and the Discipline of the Church.

2. 2. qu.
168. art.
2. ad. 1.

Aquinas, that he might mollify this Passage, so irreconcilable with *Aristotle's* Virtue of *Eutrapelia*, tells us, that *St. Ambrose* did not design utterly to banish *Jesting* out of common Conversation, but only to shew that it was not allowable in the Christian Doctrine, *Non excludit universaliter jocum a conversatione humana, sed a Doctrina sacra.* Now by *Doctrina Sacra*, he constantly means, either the Scriptures, or Preaching and Practical Precepts, or the Science of Theology. As if *St. Ambrose* meant no more, than that *Jesting* was forbidden, when men were engaged in the most Sacred and Important matters, and that Divines should not use it, when they expound the Word of God, and are teaching the People their Duty. But it is obvious to every Reader, that this is not the case *St. Ambrose* is upon; but altogether foreign to the design of that Place. And besides, It is evident from some other Reasons, which are no diminution to the acute Parts and profound Learning of this Eminent Casuist, that we are not always to expect from Him an exact Interpretation of the Fathers; especially, when he thinks himself concerned

to reconcile them with *Aristotle*, whose Notions, it is past all dispute, they did in many cases take the Liberty of differing from; and were by no means governed by.

There is somewhat more of Colour for that other Solution of this Difficulty, which proceeds upon a Conjecture, that St. *Ambrose* in the Passage now before us, address'd to such Persons only, as were in Holy Orders. And this Conjecture is strengthened by that Title to his Book, with which the *Benedictins* Edition hath published and restored it to us, *De Officijs Ministrorum*. But yet the Terms in which he expresses himself are too general to admit of this Restriction. The Arguments he brings for his Opinion are such as reach Persons of all Capacities equally; and the Method and Intention of that Treatise is to explain the duties of all Christians in Common. 'Tis true indeed, now and then, and upon two or three occasions, he observes, that Priests stand in a more strict and peculiar manner obliged to the Practice of those Virtues, which he proposes and recommends to the Generality of Men. But This is so far from releasing other Christians, that it rather binds them the faster, by making such Virtues a Pattern of Perfection. And it is plain, as well from St. *Ambrose* his own words, as from the Analogy and general Agreement of the Doctrin of the Fathers, that they disallow the *Ridiculing* way of Wit in Conversation; without any Exception or Reserve.

If these Passages of the Fathers seem too much inclining to the Extream of Rigour and Moroseness,

ness, St. Jerom hath given them their due Temperament, in his Comment upon the Epistle to the *Ephesians*; where, explaining the two faults censured by St. Paul under the Terms of *Foolish Talking* and *Festing*, he tells us, that the Former, *Foolish Talking* is a sort of rash Senseless Unthinking discourse, which hath nothing in it worthy a Man of Parts and Understanding. But *Festing* is the Effect of Premeditation and Design, which affects to divert the Hearers, and make them laugh, by saying smart and witty, or blunt and coarse, or unbecoming, or pleasant things, which is what we commonly call jocular Entertainment. And this he tells us should by no means be admitted into the Conversation of Saints, that is, of Christians, because it becomes such much rather to weep than to laugh. *Inter stultiloquium autem et scurrilitatem hoc interest, quod Stultiloquium nihil in se Sapiens, et eorde dignum hominis habet. Scurrilitas vero de prudenti mente descendit, et consulto appetit quædam, vel urbana verba, vel rustica, vel turpia, vel faceta; quam nos Jocularitatem alio verbo possumus appellare: ut risum moveat audientibus. Verum et Hæc à Sanctis Viris penitus propellenda; quibus magis convenit flere atq; lugere.*

Hieron
Lib. 3. in
Ephej. cap.
5.

But yet in the process of his Discourse he forms this Objection to himself. That this Opinion may possibly be thought not only severe but cruel, in making no allowance for human frailty, and damning men for Words spoken in Jest only, *Videretur sententia esse crudelis, non ignoscere imbecillitati fragilitatis humanæ; cum etiam per jocum dicta nos damnarent.* To which he returns this Answer, that, Supposing men not to go to Hell for such Liberties, yet they will have a
less

less glorious place in Heaven. *Neque vero locum Stultiloquio et Scurrilitati damus, dum non excluduntur a Regno; sed quomodo apud Patrem diversæ sunt Mansiones, et stella a stellâ differt in gloriâ, sic et Resurrectio Mortuorum. Quamvis aliquis a fornicatione immundiciâ et lascivi alienus sit, tamen si stultiloquus et scurrâ fueri, non tenebit eum locum, quem possessurus erat, si hæc Vitia non haberet.* It seems then, upon this most favourable Concession, that these are Vices, and at least Venial Sins still. So far are they from deserving to be reckoned among Virtues, or capable of that Honour Aristotle hath done them. For he accounts *the not knowing how to make the Company laugh, or blaming those who have this knack*, among the Vices, and attributes this to a certain *Ferity, and Rustick Roughness of Temper.* Plato quite contrary laid it down for a Maxim, that a *Wise Man would blush and be ashamed to make people Laugh.* But Aristotle, who all along pretends to refine upon his Master, labours to accommodate Virtues to the Humour of the world, and bend them to common Opinion and Custome: as if it were the Business of Philosophers not so much to regard what is strictly True, as what is Practicable and Modish.

Notwithstanding the Fathers did not approve this industrious promoting of Laughter, yet did they readily admit of such an agreeable sweetness in Conversation, as should render it entertaining and graceful: And a certain Salt of Wisdom, such as St. Paul recommends for the Seasoning of our Speech, and giving it a grateful relish with those that hear us. And even

Eph. 4.

116 · *Maxims and Reflections*

St. Thomas, though in deference to his great Master, (whose Authority was in that Age so Sacred, that scarce any Person then living had the Hardiness to depart from *Aristotle's* sense of the matter) he seems to have carried this Liberty of *Jesting* too far, where he treats of these matters in his *Summe*; yet even there he reduces these Delights to a very scanty proportion. He requires, that the returns of Diversion should be but seldom, and that such Pleasure should be to common Conversation the same that Salt is to our common Food; not that a meal should be made of it, but that, by a very sparing mixture, other discourse may be quickned and made palatable by it. He absolutely forbids all those measures, which quite let loose the mind, and, instead of refreshing, destroy its grave and serious composure, and render it regardless of, or unfit for, more important Business. This I have already shown to be his sense, both in his *Summe*, and his Commentary upon St. Paul; For there he comes a great deal closer up to the Expressions and Judgment of the Fathers, and does, in agreement with Them, reckon *Jesting* among the Vices reproved by this Apostle.

XXXIII.
St. Basils
Remarks
upon the
Gravity of
a Christian
Conversa-
tion.
Reg. brev.
int. 31.
Reg. suf.
int. 17.

It was a very common thing with the Fathers to understand that Passage of our Blessed Lord, *Wo unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep*, in the utmost rigour, and literal Sense. St. Basil, who from thence inferred, that it was not lawful to laugh at all, ὁλοτε καβαλε; Though it were merely upon the account of the mighty number of those wicked and profane Wretches, who openly affront God and

trea

treat his Laws with despight and contempt, (This single consideration being sad enough to damp and quash all disposition to mirth in a zealous and Good man) moderates the severity of this Sentence, by that in Ecclesiasticus. A Fool lifteth up his Voice with Laughter, but a Wise man doth scarce smile a little : i. e. he seems to check himself for it, when he does it. Agreeably to this Sentence, he allows us with the Preacher, to sweeten our Countenance now and then with a Modest Smile : But as for those loud Peals of noisey Mirth, those Rattlings and Shakings of the Lungs and Sides, which are rather Violent Convulsions than any real Delight, These, according to Him, are by no means the Practice of a Man of Virtue, and One who is a Master of Himself ; And this Extravagance of Mirth is what he often inveighs against, and presses the preventing and Suppressing it, as Duties to which the Christian Religion obliges an that Profess it.

Now, whether the Maxims and Precepts here mentioned ought to be carried to the utmost point of Rigour, and held for obligatory in all cases ; or, whether there may not in some instances be some abatements allowed ; and what again that Equitable Relaxation is, or where to take place, are Questions, which no man should undertake to determine, and every wise and good man would be very tender of determining, by the judgment of his own Private Spirit ; but especially where Himself is a Party. Things may seem very hard and impracticable to us, which yet Almighty God both sees highly reasonable, and knows very possible to be performed.

performed. God, I say, who perfectly understands the Nature and Excellence of that Happiness and Reward promised to our Obedience, and the Power of that Assistance he affords us in the Discharge of it, knows how much these Advantages ought in equity to cost us. And though the Infirmities of Humane Nature may seem to require these Diversions, and render our Condition Pityable; yet no Tenderness for our own Frailty should make us partial Interpreters of Gods Laws: nor prevail with us to depart from the Grave and Serious Deportment besitting the Virtue and Quality of Christians. These things, however severe, must not either fright, or blind us in the search after Truth; but we must take the whole Scheme of it together as it lyes; that, by contemplating it's Perfection, we may be made duly sensible, both how deeply we ought to humble our Souls before God, for a Conversation so very defective and short of its just perfection; and likewise how high a Pitch it is, that we are bound to aim at. The Engagements of a Christian in the Point before us cannot be extended further; than St. Basil hath set them, upon that saying

Math. 12. 36. of our Blessed Lord, *For every Idle word men shall give an account in the Day of Judgment.* Where to that Enquiry, What that Word is, which, the Son of God hath declared, men shall be called to so severe a Reckoning for, he returns this Answer, *It is every Word, which hath no regard to, nor does contribute or aim at, that Usefulness, and Benefit, which our Lord and his Religion have enjoyned us to seek and follow after.* And the Danger, adds he, of speaking these words

is

Reg. brev.
12. 23.

is so great, that a Discourse, otherwise and in its own Nature Good, if it have no manner of reference to Edification, promoting Faith and Virtue, is not free from this Danger, upon Pretence of the Good it contains. But having no tendency to edify our Neighbour, it afflicts and grieves the Holy Spirit. This he afterwards illustrates by a Passage in the Epistle to the *Ephesians*; And then at last concludes, *And what need is there for me to say, how wicked and dangerous a thing it is to grieve the Holy Spirit?*

The same Doctrin is likewise to be met with, and many Arguments brought in confirmation of it, in several other parts of his Works. And we must not think to evade the Severity of these Rules, by a fond Imagination, that they were intended only for a Monastick Life. For, quite contrary, his Expressions, the Reasons by which he supports them, and the whole Strain and Temper of his Discourse manifestly prove, that he makes it his business to lay down the Obligations, which Christianity hath laid upon all in common; though he do indeed urge them upon the Monks, as persons under peculiar and Stricter Engagements to observe them. In regard a Monk pretends to be nothing else, but a Christian, who hath withdrawn from the world, that he may more vigorously and without Interruption fulfill the Duties of the Christian Religion: Which though Others have the same Engagements, yet have they not the same Opportunities, to perform.

And if it be farther pleaded, in mitigation of this Rigour, that the Failings *St. Basil* reprehends,

prehends, are however but Venial Sins, and for that reason reputed and called Small: That Father, I must tell you, will not endure, that any Christians should argue at this rate. *There is no such thing, says he, as a Small Sin. That which we commit is always the Great Sin, because it is so great as to overcome us, and that is the little Sin, which, when we are tempted to, we refuse and overcome.* And, though it be true, that, in a Comparative sense, some Sins be small; yet a Christian can never be able to make a certain Judgment, how very highly some such Sins are aggravated, by the violent Inclination of the Heart that yields it self up to them. And every Christian hath cause enough and too much to tremble at that Warning given him by the Wise man, *He that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little.*

Ecclef. 19.
1.

XXXIV.
The Consequence of the foregoing Doctrine.

And now there is no Occasion for undertaking so difficult and laborious a task, as the determining precisely, what degrees of Wickedness and Mischief Plays may be justly charged with. This were a nice Enquiry, and must depend upon the careful consideration of a great many particular Cases and Circumstances. It is sufficient for my present purpose, that, by the Principles and concurrent Testimony of the Fathers, they undoubtedly deserve to be reckoned among the most dangerous Diversions in the World. And thus much at least my Reader is by this time qualified to judge, whether the Fathers, and Holy Doctors, who followed after them, and particularly, whether St. Thomas among the rest, who have all expressed themselves so severely, and left such strict Rules of Behaviour

Behaviour behind them, would ever have endured the Buffooneries of the modern Theatres, or allowed a Christian in personating the many vile ridiculous Characters, which the Stage presents us with every day. And much less yet can we believe, that any wise and good man should be found, who does not readily agree, that the making Buffoonery a constant practice, and Trade, can never consist with the Character of a grave and serious Person, such as every Disciple of *Jesus Christ*, it is evident, is supposed and required to be. But when once I have brought you thus far, *St. Chrysostom* then will fall upon you might and main. He will tell you, that it is upon Your account that a Christian makes himself a publick Jest, that You are answerable for his betraying the Dignity of, and becoming a Scandal to, the glorious Name he bears. For do but You says he, take care there shall be no Audience, and the Actors will cease of course. And if it be such a commendable, Such a fine thing, to turn Mimick and break jests upon a stage, why do you not enter men of Birth and Quality in this noble Profession? To men of sense and Honour we may alledge, What Beauty, what Commendation can there be in an Art which no man can excell in, without Shame and Scandal? And a great deal more to the same purpose.

Chrys.
Hom. 6. in
Matth.
and Hom.
17. ad.
Ephes.

St. Thomas, as I have shewn at large, treads in his steps. And, if he have a little deviated into the Notions, or rather into the Language and Expressions, of *Aristotle*, yet when nicely examined we find him stanch at the bottom; and not at all differing from the Strictness and Regularity of the Fathers who led the way before him. And

XXXV.
*The Conclusion of
 this whole
 Discourse.*

And now, after what hath been already said, it will be of very little consequence to enquire into the Opinions of other Divines about this matter. I shall make no difficulty to own, that after having Set themselves for a long while against all Publick Shews, and in a particular manner against those of the Theatre, there was a certain period in the Church, when men began to entertain some hopes, that the Stage might be reduced to such measures, as, if observed, would render it harmless and decent, or at least not altogether insupportable; This put them upon Regulations, and Remedies, for preventing the mischiefs, which must necessarily grow from the people's furious and unconquerable Inclination to those dangerous Amusements. But Experience quickly convinced them that Humorsom Drollery and Studied Diversion bear too hard upon Licentiousness, ever to be entirely separated from it. Not that these things, when considered abstractedly and in their own nature, have any such necessary Connexion and mutual Dependence, as should render such a separation absolutely impossible; or, as the Schools speak, that it implies any Contradiction. So far from that, that I will venture to say, the thing is not utterly Impracticable; for there have been in fact some Innocent Representations of this kind. It were an unreasonable Stretch of Rigour to condemn some of those used in Colleges; which the Masters impose upon the Youth under their Charge, as Exercises which contribute to the forming their Style, their Gestures, their Elocution, their Behaviour, or however for a Refreshment and harmless Diversion to them at the Close of the year,
 when

when they have gone through the painfull course of their Studies. And yet those Rules are worth our observation, which a very Learned Society have made upon this occasion, who with extraordinary zeal and marvellous Success have devoted themselves to the instructing of Young persons. They order, *that the Tragedies and Comedies should never be allowed in any Language but Latin; that they should be acted but very Seldom; that the Subject of such Plays should not be Grave only, but Holy and Pious; that the Interludes between the Acts should likewise be all in Latin, and contain nothing, which in the least breaks in upon the Rules of Decency; and that no female Character, nor so much as the Habit of that Sex, should be admitted to appear upon the Stage.* A man in his reading may discover infinite Touches of this Wisdom, in the Regulations of this venerable Institution: and particularly we find, that with regard to Plays, notwithstanding all their precautions to preserve those Collegiate Recreations, from all the abuses with which other Representation of this kind are tainted, the best course they can take is, after all, to be sure, that the Returns of them be but very seldom. And if it be so exceeding difficult to bring the Theatre to any tolerable Decorum, under the jealous observation and severe discipline of prudent and pious Masters, what a wretched thing is it like to be, when left to the mercy of Dissolute and impudent Players; men that have no principle which they go upon, nor any other end to serve, but the bringing in as much Profit to themselves, and the giving the Spectators as much Pleasure, as possibly they can. The Female Characters, which those

Reg. Stud.
reg. Rect.
art. 13.

Regula-

Regulators refuse upon any terms to admit upon the Stage, for several very good Reasons, and particularly to decline those disguises, which even the Philosophers highly condemned, These, if thrown out would reduce Plays to so little choice of subjects, and those too so infinitely distant from the Spirit and Temper of Modern Plays, that to confine them within this compass were in effect to make them fall of themselves. How manifest is it then to every one, who will but take the pains to consider it, that Plays cannot be supported without we allow them to mingle Evil with Good? Nay not only so, but the Alloy of Evil must be in much the Greater Quantity, to enable the Play-house to stand; because they live and thrive by recommending themselves to the taste and humour of the people, and this Taste to be sure is vitiated, and thinks it self best regaled with the worst Objects. Upon this account also it is that among all the solemn and bitter Invectives against the Theatre, to be met with in the Fathers, we never find them laying any project, or making any attempts to reform it. They were very sensible, how vain and fruitless all such Expedients must needs prove, when brought to Try-all. They saw these mens business was to please, and that whoever makes that his End, will stick at no means of compassing it. Virtue and Conscience are then set aside, and pleased the Audience must be at any rate. Of the two kinds of Dramatick Poetry, The One is grave and serious but full of Passion; The Other more resembling common Conversation, but all upon the *Repartie*, and the *Jest*, and the Buffoonery; So that they could not, in either kind,

find

find any thing fit for Christians ; and therefore they thought the safest, as well as Shortest, way would be utterly to discard all. For why should they give themselves the Endless trouble of reducing them to the Rules of Virtue, since This was in effect fighting against the Nature of the thing ? For Plays must cease to be what they are, and proceed upon quite different views and Ends, before they can ever be brought within the compass of Severe Morality. The very Genius of Comedy consists in furnishing Subjects for laughter. *Cæsar* himself was of opinion that *Terence* was defective in this point. People naturally covet to have the ridiculous part carried to a greater height ; and the good acceptance, which *Aristophanes* and *Plautus* found in the world, is an evident proof to what an excess of Licentiousness Mirth and Jestings naturally degenerate, when Men give a loose to them. *Terence*, who, in imitation of *Menander*, checkt himself in the Ridiculeing part of Comedy, yet is not one whit the chaster for all that. And we shall ever find it an incredible difficulty to keep the Pleasant part uninfected with the unlawfull and Lientious. Upon this account you so often find in the Canons these Four words put together, *Ludicra, Jocularia, Turpia, Obscæna, Diverting, Jocular, Scandalous, and Obscena*. Not that these things always go together, but because they border so near, and slide into one another so naturally ; that it is past any man's Skill to keep them asunder, by indulging one sort, and not being insensibly overtaken by some of the rest. This cuts off all reasonable Hopes of making Plays truly regular

lar, because the very design and Foundation is naught and rotten. For Tragedy, which undertakes to represent the Great and potent passions, labours to move those that are most dangerous to be Stirred, because the Affecting of these is likewise most agreeable; And Comedy, whose design is to divert and make you laugh, (which one would think upon this account might be so managed, as to be the less vicious and dangerous of the Two) besides the Indecency of that Character in a Christian, does too easily and naturally engage men in Licentiousness. And thus it must do, to recommend it self to the world. For however moderate and reserved the men of the World may pretend to be, yet, generally Speaking, they are much better pleased, that Vice should be covered up, and veiled over a little, than that it should be entirely Suppressed, and not Suffered to come abroad at all.

Our own Experience hath taught us, what all the Reformation of Plays is come to, which hath been so zealously endeavoured in the present Age. Our Farces are Still full of gross, and nauseous, and barefaced Filthiness. And even the Comedies, which pretend to a higher Character and more correct Strain, are abominably Sullied with it too. The deepest and gravest Tragedies will not take without a world of Love and Tender Passion. And all the effect, which hath followed upon the Caution of a great Minister of *France*, for purging the Stage is come at last to this: That Men are a little more modest and artfull in their Expressions; The same things are Still said in
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Somewhat cleaner, but not less moving Language; and the same Baits are laid for weak and unwary Souls, which are but the more dangerous and more likely to take their prey, for being laid more out of Sight.

These things duly considered will make our Wonder cease, that the Church should declare her dislike of, and censure all these Sorts of Pleasure in generall. For, although She commonly restrain the Canonick Punishments designed to suppress them, to some particular Persons, as for Instance The Clergy; and to some certain Places, as the Churches for example; and to some certain Times as Holydays; because in the usuall methods of Process, her Goodness and Prudence does (as we observed before) think fit to Spare the Generality of people in the Publick Censures; Yet, among these Prohibitions, thus expressly limited, there are many severe Girds Scattered against all Sorts of such Publick Entertainments, and many Arguments aimed at dissuading Christians from encourageing and frequenting them. St. Charles, whose Authority is produced as One of those, who in charitable Condescension did for some time Submit to attempt the Regulation of Plays, soon found himself beaten off from all hope of succeeding in that design. And in the kind Care he took to cover the Corruption of the Theatre, in Lent and upon Holidays at least, he does not forbear to inspire an universall dislike of them. He calls Plays a *Rag* or *Remnant of Paganisme*, not that there were really any remains of Paganisme in the Publick Representations of his time; but because those Passions, which

*Art. p. 4.
inst. prad.
Bir. 1599.
p. 485.*

ibed. p. 6.

which formed the Heathen Gods, reign in Plays still, and are respected and adored by Christians. Sometimes, after the Pattern of the Ancient Canons, the Spirit of which he hath entirely transfused into his writings, he contents himself with calling them *Trifling and unprofitable Diversions, Ludicra et inania Spectacula*. Accounting, that Christians, who have such important affairs upon their hands, and must be Shortly judged before so terrible a Tribunall for their management of them, could not find vacant space enough in Life, for Amusements, so vain, and which take up so many of their pretious Hours. This appeared, in his Esteem, Objection sufficient against them, though they had been liable to no other. Though they had not been, so full of Temptations, Whether such as are gross and open, and upon that account more detestable; Or whether such as are nicely wrought, and upon that account more Dangerous. Nor does he think it reconcileable with a Christians Character, to receive such tender and violent Impressions, or be so eagerly concerned for matters of little or no Consequence. Upon the whole matter he brands these unhappy Diversions with the Infamous Title, of *Allurements and Nurseries of Vice, Illecebras et Seminaria Vitiorum*. And, though he do not formally thunder out the Censures of the Church, against all who frequent and delight in them, yet he delivers such up to the zeal and Reproofs of the Preachers; whom he Solemnly enjoyns to Spare no pains, that may work men up to an abhorrence of these destructive Diversions. He tells them, they ought to detest them as the Source of

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Common Calamities and things that provoke the Ibid. p. 40.
Judgments and Vengeance of Almighty God. He Conc.
admonishes Princes and Magistrates to expell and Prov. I.
utterly root out all Players, Strowlers, Actors of pag. 86:
Farces, and other common Pests; as abandoned Con. III. p.
wretches, and Corrupters of Good manners, and to 316. Con.
punish those that entertain and lodge them in Pub- VI. &c.
lick-houses. There would be no end of instanc-
ing in the severall reproachfull Titles, with
which he exposes them. And these are the Sen-
timents and Maximes of the Christian Religion
against Plays, which I have represented with
all the Care and Faithfulness I am able.

Those who flattered themselves with a vain hope of obtaining an Approbation for Plays may now be convinced by the generall Outcry against this late Discourse in their favour, and by the Publick Censures it hath drawn upon some who have owned their being seduced by the dangerous Opinions propagated and maintained by it, how averse the Church is from affording them any Countenance or Support. And this is yet a farther Argument against that Scandalous Discourse, that, notwithstanding the reputed Author be a Divine, yet the world cannot accuse Divines with being Favourers and Approvers of it. For few or none have appeared to be such, except the Comick Poets and Players, whose Interest, disposes them, to uphold a Tract as infamous and pernicious, as those very Plays it defends.

But enough hath been said upon this Subject, and the only thing now remaining is to Shew unto men a more excellent way. In order
 K there

- therefore to extirpate utterly all Relish for Plays, we should recommend that better delight men may find from Reading the Gospel and attending diligently upon Prayer. Let us therefore, with *St. Paul*, Set our selves seriously to consider the Blessed *Jesus, the Author and*
- Hebr. XII.* 2. *Finisher of our Faith*, that very *Jesus*, who, when he condescended to take upon him all our naturall Infirmities, that *so he might be like unto his*
- Ibid.* 15. *IV. Brethren in every thing, Sin only excepted*, was content to submit to Our Tears, and our Sorrows, to accept out Pains, nay our Terrours and Agonies of Spirit, yet we do not find that he took our Diversions, our Mirth, and our Laughter. He did not think fit, that those
- Psal. XLV.* Lips, which *were full of Grace*, should ever once dilate themselves by any Motion, attended with Indecent Gayety, or unworthy the Character of God made Man. I do not wonder at this Difference. For our Pains and Grievs are reall and substantiall, because These are just Punishments and naturall Effects of our Sins; from the time that Sin entred into the world we have not any Solid and sufficient foundation for Mirth and Joy. This made the Wise-man cry out, *I looked upon Laughter to be Madness*, and I said unto Mirth, *Why dost thou cheat me?* or, as the Originall imports, *I said unto Laughter Thou art a Fool, and unto Mirth, what dost thou here?* Wherefore dost thou transport me, like an Extravagant unthinking man; and endeavour to perswade me that I have any just cause of rejoycing, when I am so thick beset with Evils on every side? Thus the *Word made Flesh*, the Eternall Truth manifested in
our
- Eccles. II.* 2.

our Nature, might without any diminution to his Wisdom and Honour, take upon him our Sufferings, which are Reall; but he would not stoop so low as to take our Joys and our Mirth, which are only fantastical and Imaginary; and imply great mistake, or great Inconsideration, when we indulge them freely.

And our Blessed Saviour was not without agreeable qualities and conversation to recommend him notwithstanding.

All men, we are told, were astonished and wondred at the gracious Words, that proceeded out of his Mouth.

And not only his Apostles said, *Master, to whom shall we go?*

Thou hast the words of Eternall Life; but even the Officers, Sent to apprehend his Person, brought

back word to those Pharisees, by whose Commission they acted, *never Man spoke like this man.*

And yet, as charming as his words were then, he speaks with quite another sort of sweetness, with a more sensible, more ravishing Delight, when he makes himself heard and understood in the Hearts of Good men, and kindles that pure celestiaII Fire, with which *David* felt himself enflamed, when he burst out into that Expression of his zeal, *The Fire kindled, and at the last I spake with any Tongue.* Then, Then it is,

that, by the Consolation of the Holy Spirit, there Springs up and overflows such a plentiful

Effusion of Divine Joy in Pious and Devout Souls! A Joy too sublime for the world to

have any true sense or just Notion of; a Joy, which teaches us to contemn that which courts and caresses our Senses, and grows more exquisite by such Contempt. A lasting and un-

changeable Peace of mind, a sweet and reviving Hope of enjoying God, the Chief, the Only

Good.

Luke IV.
22.

John VI
69.

John VII.
46.

Psal.
XXXIX.
4.

Good. No Rehearsall, no Musick, no Harmonious Voice, is necessary, or comparable to this Pleasure. And therefore if we require Shews and Reprerentations, to move our Affections with an agreable Vehemence, If we would have Shedding of Blood, and Images of Love and Tenderneſs ſet before our Eyes; let us fix our Sight and Thoughts upon the ſame Bleſſed *Jeſus*. For what can we poſſibly look upon, ſo Beautifull and Charming to behold, ſo Tender and Affecting, as the Bloody Death of *Jeſus* and his Martyrs? What Battels bravely fought, What Crowns won, can in any degree compare with his Glorious Conqueſt over all the world, and the Throne and Kingdom of his Truth ſet up in the minds of men? What darts are ſo piercing, as thoſe with which he wounds the Hearts of his Servants? What Sighs ſo pure and chaſt, as thoſe which His Church is continually breathing forth, and the Souls that are raviſhed with his love, and run and pant after his ſweet Perfumes? Were men once brought to ſuch a temper, as to taſt and delight in theſe Heavenly ſweetneſſes, to feed and feaſt upon this hidden Manna, the Play-houſe doors would quickly be Shut up; and every truly Chriſtian Soul would take up *David's* Meditation, *The Sinners*, and ſuch as are fond of this world and it's ſenſuall Delights, have contrived lyes and ſeduced me with Fictions and Fables; the fond conceits and inventions of their own Brain, or (according to the Septuagint) *they talk to me of falſe and deceitfull Pleaſures but my Delight hath been in thy Law*. Nothing but this fills mens hearts with true Joy, and ſuch, as having a firm foundation, ſtands faſt, and endures for evermore.

Pſal.
CXIX.

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As for Those, who are in good earnest desirous to make a thorough Reformation in Plays, that so, like the Heathens of Old, we might contrive to insinuate Morality and Wisdome by the most entertaining methods; and at once consult the Pleasure and Profit of so mixt an Audience, by introducing proper Examples and Serious Instructions for Princes and common People; I cannot find any fault with the Honest Intention of these well-meaning Men. But then I must beg leave to put them in mind, how improper an Expedient they have pitched upon for their purpose. And this they will soon be sensible of, if they reflect, that Charming the Senses is but a very Aukward and unlikely way of reforming the Mind, and introducing the Sentiments and love of severe Virtue. The Theatre indeed might possibly do some service to Heathens, whose Virtue was imperfect, and gross, worldly and superficial only; But alas! Christians cannot expect the same Benefit from it. For it hath not the Authority, nor the Dignity, nor the Efficacy, requisite for inspiring the refined and exalted Virtues, suitable to the State and Covenant of the Gospel. As for Kings, God hath provided them a better Teacher, He sends them to his Law, to learn their Duty there. He orders that they *Should read this diligently all the Days of their Life*; that they *Should, with David meditate and exercise themselves in it day and night*, and with Solomon, that they *should be led by Religious Wisdom when they go, that they should be kept by it, when they sleep, that they talk and converse familiarly with it, when they awake*

Deut.
XVII. 19.
Psal. I. 2.
CXIX. 55.
93. 95. 96.
Prov. VI.
22.

awake. But as for the Instructions dropt from the Stage, their touch is too soft and gentle to make any deep or powerfull Impression. There is really nothing of Weight, and Seriousness, and true Force at the Bottom. And that little they pretend to lyes too far out of sight, and is so disguised, that but few discover, and fewer yet attend to it. In Short, It is the fondest Imagination in the world to hope for any mighty Reformation, or true Improvement, from a method, where matters are managed so, as to make a Mans Vices a Jest, and his Virtue an Amusement.

THE END.

ERRATA.

PAge 61. 23. *ast.* finds. *d.*, p. 9. 18. *ast.* express. *r.* I pray, P. 11. 6. *r.* alledged. *in marg.* for 74. 47. p. 12. 25. *r.* appear. 1. 30. *r.* insensibly. p. 15. 5. *r.* the Poet. p. 17. 22. *r.* Vice. p. 18. *in marg.* *r.* Precieuses: p. 24. *in marg.* *r.* 1. 7. 11. 21. *am. ful.* p. 30. 29. *r.* though. p. 31. *in marg.* *r.* Conf. 111. 1. p. 33. *in marg.* *r.* Cont. *ful.* 17. 14. p. 39. 17. *r.* Virtue. p. 48. *marg.* *r.* Conc. Turon. Can. 8. Capitul. Bal. 1. 2. ad. 3. C. 71. p. 90. *marg.* *r.* Isai. LVIII. P. 93. *marg.* for cap. *r.* in corp. P. 96. *marg.* *r.* Lib. 4. dist. 16. p. 99. *marg.* *r.* Exod. XXXI. 12. P. 107. 13. *r.* *Bois de la* p. 115. 16. *r.* lascivia. 17. fuerit. p. 123. 4. *r.* occasion. 1. 23. *r.* Representations. *marg.* *r.* Stud. *tit.* reg. p. 127. *marg.* *r.* *inst. præd.* Edit. for P. 3. 112. *r.* 128. In the Preface. P. 3. 1. 11. *r.* Justifies. p. 6. 23. *r.* write. p. 86. *r.* that. p. 8. 29. for the. *r.* fit.

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